



JEW'S DAUGHTER



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THE
JEW'S DAUGHTER;

OR, THE
WITCH OF THE WATER-SIDE,

A Story of the
THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

BY
MRS. BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF

'BROKEN HEART; OR, THE VILLAGE BRIDAL,' 'CANADIAN GIRL,'
'COTTAGE GIRL; OR, THE MARRIAGE DAY,' 'FAMILY SIN, (A),'
'GIPSY BRIDE, (THE),' 'GIPSEY QUEEN; OR, THE CHANGED
BRIDEGROOMS,' 'JANE SHORE; OR, THE GOLDSMITH'S WIFE,'
'JEW'S DAUGHTER, (THE).'

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THE JEW'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

ONE winter evening, of a year in the thirteenth century, Jocenus, a Jewish merchant was employed in an apartment that served as a mercantile office.

He was a noble-minded man, in the zenith of life; of a dignified figure, with a countenance marked with the Hebrew expression, and overspread with learning and intelligence.

His complexion was darkened by exposure to many a blast and sunbeam, of sea and land. Upon his head he wore a jewelled turban, sloping to the back of the neck. His beard fell, coal-black, to his girdle, and was waved and glossed with skill.

His dress was a tunic of dark fine stuff, with large loose sleeves lined with fine fur. A pouch of scented leather was attached to his girdle, with a long straight knife, and an antique inkhorn. His Spanish boots were turned down with expensive fur; and the Jewish badge, was fastened upon his breast.

Over a desk that slanted was thrown a strip of parchment, each end of which fell to the floor in a roll; it was a Hebraical deed of acquittance, on which the merchant was pointing characters of his native tongue—his lines moving up the parchment instead of down, and his words from right to left instead of from left to right.

He threw himself back in his seat his right hand resting on the deed, and his elbow on a black chest placed against the wall, while he looked with his intelligent eye towards his young companion, who stood weighing coin in scales at the chest.

'What think you, nephew,' said the Jew, 'is not mischief at work in our busy town? Can we have Prince Edward, our prime enemy, here, with the pope's legate, and the earl of Lincoln, with all their covetous hordes, and we not suffer harm? Do you think it likely—or possible?' A cloud fell over his look as he spoke and he fixed his eye on the youth.

'It is possible, but not likely. I met Myrza, the Witch of the Water-side, this morning, and she prophesied—'

The Jew, more clear-headed than men of the day are usually, when all the land was overrun with superstition laughed with scorn, and interrupted him, exclaiming, 'Myrza, again!—well, we will not tremble at her prophecies: we know something better and surer, Gesta, my nephew than her idle predictions—my mind is of a firmer temper, than to be shaken by the extravagancies of a deranged brain.' Again he laughed, but more charitable: 'You are young,' said he, 'but I have lived in Arabia, and other countries, where I have seen the *method* of these arts; and I have outlived the time when mere impressions can delude. Myrza, the witch, is an ordinary woman, in my eye. But how comes it she takes so vast an interest in you? She seems ever hovering about your footsteps like an evil spirit in corporeal clay. You must be wary, or she will make a wizard of you, nephew.'

The individual addressed seemed to shrink from the subject; he attempted to smile—a smile which whoever had once seen could not wish repeated. Yet it was a smile of humility—deep to painfulness—to extreme excess—morbid and unfathomable. He was a strange being, twenty summers he might have seen run their course since he first awoke to the consciousness of his own existence—how many more than twenty, none with whom he lived could tell and he never seemed desirous that any should number the term of his life. Perpetual gloom had settled on his attenuated visage, and had taken up its residence in his misty eye. His stature was stunted; his shoulders broad and stooping; an unsightly protuberance disfigured his breast; and the ghastliness of his complexion, and the emaciated wanness of his hands, told that his had been a life of physical, as well as of mental suffering.

When he spoke it was in a voice that pierced the heart and betrayed more than the speaker guessed. It betrayed some gloomy secret lurking in the mind, betrayed a consuming grief which could know no alleviation, endure no sympathy; and it betokened, with all its morbidities, and its mistakes—a SOUL. His eye, also, now and then, but rarely, showed a sudden fire. His dress was a Jewish gaberdine, with a badge, girdle, and sandals, to which when he went out, was added the high Jewish cap of yellow, from under which his brown hair descended to his shoulders.

The merchant and his nephew resumed their occupations, which, for a moment or so, had been suspended.

'Fifty zecchins between the two last Sabbaths, did not the prior send hither?' inquired Jocenus; to which Gesta replied in the affirmative: and added, 'He had a saddle and footcloth for his best palfrey at the same time.'

'True, you are correct,' said the merchant, 'it is very singular where this once poor superior raises his funds. He was the poorest head of a monastic house in or near our city. There are two other remarkable questions abroad which are akin to this.—Where is the good confessor, whom Lord Hugh, the crusader, left with his wife and infant?—and where is the money, which, when Lady Helen died, she left in trust with that confessor for her heir? The house of Icanno, to which the worthy priest had belonged, was chosen for the retreat of the orphan, as he is deemed, though it is as yet not certain that Lord Hugh, his father, will not return.'

The Jew stroked his beard in meditation, giving expression to his curiosity concerning these three circumstances—the disappearance of the confessor, the loss of the heir's money, and the prior's increase of wealth.

'Did not Lady Helen's estates fall into the hands of the earl, who held them of the king in chief?' asked Gesta.

'The main portion of them did,' replied Jocenus; 'but, in her last sickness she parted with all she could to me; including her most valuable jewels, and the best furniture of her mansion, for which I gave her a round sum of gold pieces—what has become of all *this* produce—to say nothing of the money derived from sale of the remaining articles and the mansion, which were disposed of by the confessor?'

'Some have said,' observed Gesta, 'that the prior accounts for these circumstances in this way. He asserts, that the confessor came to Icanno with the infant, whom he tenderly cherished, and brought a box of coins with him; but shortly after, he took the box and determined to proceed as a pilgrim to Palestine with it, in search of the knight, Lord Hugh. The prior professes to suppose, either that the confessor was lost in the dangerous marshes he had to cross, or that he had been murdered, for the sake of plunder; for not even the prior ventures to insinuate that the confessor was capable of treachery to the young heir.'

'I know that he so explains these things,' said the merchant; 'but is it true? Say the confessor did set out to seek his patron in Palestine, yet five years have gone by since he departed—and suppose him to have died abroad among strangers; yet the second question remains involved in mystery. The prior of Icanno gives out that the boy is dependent upon his bounty—how so? Did the confessor take with him a weighty box of coins? Most unlikely! He would meet with dangers enough on his way without taking that to increase the hazard. He was a man of too good sense, and knowledge of the state of travelling in our days, not to consider all this; and it is most suspicious how the prior finds means to perform now what he does. He seems to find money with as much ease as myself. And I believe,' he added, resuming his writing, 'most persons think my house is built on a gold mine.'

The upper end of the roll had been

drawn up to the plane of the desk, and the deed was almost finished. The heap of gold pieces in Gesta's left hand had diminished, and the contents of the scale had proportionably raised the height of the accumulation on his right. When the merchant again paused, again handled his beard, and said, recalling bygone days.

'I remember, as yesterday, my Judith's fifteenth birthday—now more than seven years ago. It was the day of Lord Hugh's marriage with Lady Helen. I had been much at court before that time, where I advanced loans upon profitable usury. Lord Hugh was a favourite with the king; and he frequently passed from one part of the country to the other negotiating for his highness. On some of these occasions, he had visited my house; and a friendship of no mean kind sprang up between us. He protected my interests in more than one time of necessity and peril; he never injured me in word or deed; and, though a Jew, I should welcome him back to his native shores, if I had the opportunity, with the truest esteem. He is the only Gentile I ever did place at all in my heart.'

Here the merchant stopped, and wrote with rapidity, finishing the deed without further interruption to his thoughts. No sooner had he commenced rolling it up, than he adverted to the subject on which he had been at intervals conversing with his nephew.

'It seems to have been a day—I mean Lord Hugh's marriage day—painful to many individuals. The knight evinced decided repugnance to the affair, and took pains to declare his determination to depart to Palestine, when the pope should call for the next supply of soldiers against the Moslems. Lady Helen, whom he married solely by the king's command, fainted more than once, as the procession by sound of trumpet, harp, dulcimer, and lute, entered the minster, and came therefrom: and Myrza, your maternal wif, Gesta—your attendant spirit—stopped the band of minstrels as

they were piping 'Light of Love,' and 'Sir Hugh de Gant, the brave, the cause of all our mirth,' and shaking her mistletoe at the end of her steel wand, commanded silence. The stoutest heart fell—the cheeks of the veiled ladies grew white as their robes—not a minstrel dared utter another note; and in silence the train passed under the thick Saxon arch of Lord Hugh's mansion.

'Then a little before,' continued the merchant, depositing the roll in the chest, 'as the children and monks sent up their anthems through the galleries of the minster, a great bat fell, spreading its wings on the marble pavement, close to the feet of Lady Helen, and a death owl raised its harsh shriek at the porch of the gate as the banns and dowry were proclaimed outside according to popish regulation. The morning had been bright, and beautiful; only one slight cloud of fleece had dimmed the blue welkin; yet, when the bishop opened the velvet and gold-bound missal on the altar, and began the ceremony, a burst of thunder made the building rock as though its foundations were sand: I never before heard so appalling a shock of the kind—lightning of the most deadly sort came with it; and, I am mistaken, if a slight earthquake did not cause the ground to vibrate, also. The blue-forked fire rested among the delicate fretwork of the tower, and glided down the west front to the earth. All this noise and display was from that same trailing cloud of fleece, which had increased in size and density without more than a quarter of an hour's warning; and then, parting in two, grew brassy-coloured, and obscured the sun. Strangest of all, the storm was weary of its own violence almost as soon as it was awakened, for there were no more than two or three peals of thunder, and as many descents of flame, when the sky became as fair as ever. Myrza had the blame laid to her, as you may suppose. Witchcraft had produced all these prognostics, and she was in considerable danger of losing her life.'

'Had you the boldness to approach the minster, uncle, on such a public occasion?' asked Gesta.

'Why, in doing so,' answered Jocenus, 'I risked my goods if not my life; yet I not only approached, but entered, the galilee, or least *sacred* part of it, partly out of curiosity to hear and see something of the new papal marriage ceremony, but more particularly led by an interest in the fortunes of the Nazarene knight.'

'Uncle,' said Gesta, averting his face, 'was not my cousin, Judith, dangerously ill at the time?'

'Not dangerously,' answered the merchant, 'but seriously; and her malady was such as the best herbalist in the country could not cure, or even guess at.' (He sighed, recalling the anguish of the period.) 'She lay in a stupor from day to day, scarcely breathing, except when she heaved a heart-breaking sigh. Do not recall to my mind that sickness of her's, nephew—it never fails to make me suffer pain.' Again he sighed; and the affection with which he regarded his daughter was revealed on his countenance.

'You never ascertained the nature of her disease, then, nor its *cause*?' asked Gesta. At this moment a knocking at the door prevented the answer.

CHAPTER II.

ONE evening the sunset's light gleamed into the merchant's office through a square orifice, filled with lattice-work, placed high in the stone wall. The beams displayed cobwebs about the network, to which corresponded certain dusky awnings at each upper end of different angles of the walls, formed by these same spiders, who had grown old in this room of traffic.

Beside a chest was a coil of brown cable ropes, and a heap of hay and straw, on which slept a greyhound. In another corner stood a hamper, containing leather packages and a mule's harness.

There was a bench, opposite the desk, of stone, like the wall in which it was cut; under it, were placed a half burnt spade (which Caleb, the

merchant's servant, had thrust into the fire for fuel, on what he called an emergency,) with a beam of timber burnt at both ends, a rusty chain, and a long and short cramp of iron.

An iron ring leant against the fireplace on the hearthstone; near it was a heap of broken vessels of incense used in the synagogues; wool and flax; iron hoops, pins, and bands; pieces of alabaster, lumps of wax, and a number of spoilt ostrich and peacock feathers.

The cupboard was sufficiently open to reveal a collection of Arabic and other parchments. Rude keys of the merchant's storehouses hung on the wall; beside a Turkish scymitar, a pair of silver spurs, and an oriental sash. Beside the desk were fastened up Hebrew notices of assizes of commerce, to be held by Jewish officers in different towns—statements, in Norman-French, concerning the condition of the river Wytham, and the rates of landing and harbourage in ports connected with that river—offers for suits of armour, and for preparing the mail harness, of warsteels—and a proposal, in Saxon-English, from a nunery, concerning the embroidering of mottos in coloured silks with the needle, on saddle-cloths for ladies and priests, on cushion and floor-covers, and on cloths of state for canopies and tables.

The knock at the door was answered by Gesta, who admitted the prior of Icanno, and the earl of Lincoln.

The prior led the van of the corrupt host of ecclesiastics that swarmed within the city walls. He was a subtle and selfish man—one of the greatest promoters of mischief in the realm—although, from the reserved nature of his character, the extent of his influence was only guessed at. To the earl he condescended to become a patron and a security; the latter frequently involved himself in dilemmas with the pope and church, from which the prior always contrived to extricate him, being in correspondence with his holiness and his emissaries.

The power of the baron and earl of Lincoln may be estimated by his possessions, which old records compute at two hundred lordships, in different counties. The same authorities describe his character, which would answer for many a man, of that age, beside himself. He had outlived the maturity of his days in mental and moral darkness; he made his boast of the wickedness of the times; he scattered as profusely as he gained unjustly—though it was only the most vicious among his followers who profited by his profusion; he took no account of his receipts or disbursements; as for his household, he took nothing less than a complete army along with him; he was a fanatic. The Lincolnians were accustomed to anticipate his presence with dread, for he ruled them with a rod of iron; and misery and death followed his track amid their homes.

'Hand me the Rhenish cup, Jew,' he exclaimed, wiping his forehead, that was bedewed with perspiration, while his bulky figure dropped on the bench. After a draught, he cried—

'Thou art an emperor, Jew, to possess such wine! My garrison would make havoc in your den—ha—ha—ha'—(again he drank.) 'Where are the bow-shafts you were to bring in fee, to me? My archers lack them; and if they be not tough and supple, thou shalt hang on a gallows in my castle ballium—yea—by St. Denis of France!' A third draught drained the vessel of wine which had been handed to him; after which, he poured forth a profusion of oaths.

'This,' mentally exclaimed the merchant, 'is one of England's Christian nobles!—ignorant, and blood-thirsty, and he dares to condemn our sacred nation!'

'Mongrel cur of a blasphemer!' exclaimed the earl. 'You have abused my pitiful disposition; but, though I am a meek man, I can be angry. I sent for two hundred gold marks, and you refused me. My rascals clamour for pay. All the coin is in Jewish hands. Will you

advance—or have your house pulled about your ears? Will you advance—I say?'

'You speak briefly,' said the merchant, 'and I reply, I must have a reckoning with you on the past loans, before I advance more. The documents in this chest, belonging to you are hardly worth lodgement, for you will defy me to execute judgment on your estates, though your country's law allows me to do this—and musty parchment—who knows not?—will feed none but rats.'

'By Montjoye St. Denis of the French—thou cur!' exclaimed the earl—'If the bonds be not good thou shalt have none other! If you anger me, I will redeem them—with thy wolf teeth—which I will drag out of thy jaws, as King John did Isaac's of York, in one of my keep-dungeons. Ha—ha! a tooth against a thousand gold coins will be a high value to set upon part of a Jew's carcase—ha, ha! Thou shalt have good usury, dog! Ha, ha;—thus I will redeem my bonds! Ha, ha, ha!'

A spasm almost caused the Jew to spring from the ground; as he said,

'What I have is mine. I will not lend at disadvantage. You have been unjust to some of my nation, who now pine, and die in your prisons. So will you serve me when you have drained from me the means whereby I purchase protection.'

'Look to yourself, heretic!' roared the earl, turning toward the door. 'By the mass—cur—I will handle thee for this! Thou shalt not, by the next wane of moon, have the value of a guilder left to thee, in goods or coin!'

'The merchant forgets,' said the prior, 'that the king can, when he wills, respite the death of a Christian to a Jew. The mortgages and bonds which he holds upon your barony may be but insecure.'

'Prior, I know they are so,' interrupted Jocenus. 'There is no such thing as fair merchandise for us in England. But as secure as they can be made, I will make them. I will plead upon the earl's contracts, in the hall of Judaism, in this city,

where our officers sit. I will have all the justice I can command. As I am a son of Abraham, I will not lend a shekel but according to Judaical law! If wrong is in that, such wrongs I must bear.'

'By St. George and St. Denis—dog of a Jew!' exclaimed the earl, 'thou shalt eat pork in my donjon tower; and afterwards thou shalt bleed there! No Jewish justice—no court of Judaism shall save thee! Beware, dog, from this hour I am your enemy!'

'The merchant also forgets,' said the prior, 'that Jocenus is bound to give high guerdon, to both of us, for his safety, for he is in our power. Twice he has forfeited his goods; first, by polluting our sacred cathedral with his presence; and, secondly, by practising spells, years ago, to win the friendship of a certain noble knight, now in Palestine; and by turning his affections from a Christian damsel to a woman of his own house and tribe.'

'Liar of a churchman!' muttered the merchant.

'I am not certain,' continued the prior, 'that I have not heard of little Hugh, the child now in my charge, being seen after dark stealing out from a garden gate belonging to this house. If the sorceries of your murderous tribe, Jocenus, should injure him, I cannot answer for the consequences to all the heretics within or near our city walls.'

'I see,' said Jocenus, 'that I and mine are at hazard. I confess, that if you are both determined to work my ruin, you may accomplish it. But can a gyved hand sign an earl's release from mortgages and bonds? Can a dead Jew collect even two hundred gold marks? Destroy me, all my lands and chattels fall into the king's exchequer. Will you profit by that? My daughter, as my heiress, will be portioned by the king. Will you profit by her?'

The prior handed to the merchant a note, sealed with the royal arms, which Jocenus opened. No sooner had he read it, then he exclaimed—

'Prince Edward demands from me three thousand marks of silver,

and one thousand of gold? All that I possess is hardly worth so much. He offers terms insufficient to secure a mark. He merely demands, at peril of my head, and repeats your threats, prior. Well, at the peril of my head let it be! I will not find even one third part of the monies without fair profit.'

'The town is full of the followers of the prince and the earl,' said the prior; 'if you value your home, your wealth, or *your daughter*—think—'

The merchant compressed his lips in indignation.

'You,' said he, 'I fear more than they. You, aspiring to a crosier and to a mitre, serve any one who will advance your ambitious views. You incite my enemies to persecute me; but in secret you speak me fair. Hypocrisy is your spirit! You have brought me an infamous billet, and thus I cast it from me!'

So saying, he threw it towards the prior, who, taking it up, said, with emphasis—

'Dogs must bark; but I will have thee muzzled, lest thou bite as well as bark!' At the same moment, Caleb, the Hebrew servant, entered, and whispered in his master's ear.

'Admit him, whoever he be,' said the merchant. This third visitor seemed to have overheard the Jew's words to Caleb, and entered, stooping under the arch. Drawing up a tall figure, and pulling off a bonnet, the stranger was soon recognized as the handsome Prince Edward. His stern features were stamped with cruelty and pride, blended with solidity of mind; and perhaps with other qualities likely to render a king popular in those fearful days of war, ignorance, and oppression.

With his steel-gloved hands he pushed off from his forehead his curling hair, as he nodded to the earl, and said to Jocenus,

'Have you received my demand?'

'Noble prince,' answered the merchant, 'I have.'

'And you will raise the sum forthwith?'

The merchant had been stung; and feeling that stubborn hardihood

which arrogance and insolence produce, he replied—

'Noble prince! your father, King Henry the Third, taxes our nation most heavily. The exchequer, which has been raised up to fine us, is grievous. All we touch is taxed to maintain his highness's revenue. The rain that falls from heaven would not fall upon our fields, if it could be prevented, until we had paid to the king relief in money for the blessing. You would not let the summer breeze refresh us, if you could hold it back, until we had paid you for its use. Even the water-spring would never cool the palate of the thirsty Hebrew, without fees for your purse, if, in this beautiful land, Jehovah was not more liberal than you.'

'What has this to do with my demand?' inquired the prince.

'All—everything,' answered the merchant; 'for, say, noble prince, should not we who support the crown, be, for interests sake, something more than nominally protected by the crown?'

'Protected!' repeated the prince, 'by my father's head, when I am king, I will send the whole of England's Hebrew incumbrances out of the kingdom without warning! The coin of the realm is everywhere clipped, they say, by Jewish hands. When I wear the crown, let me but find so much as a Scottish plack or bodel cut, and I will gather ye from north to south, and from east to west, of my island, and hang ye up like reptiles!'

These threats uttered by the prince, (afterwards King Edward I.) he failed not to perform during his arbitrary reign. Yet this man has been lauded to the skies.

'And you dare complain,' the prince continued, 'of the condition on which you are permitted to trade in King Henry's domains? Do you not know that you are only here by sufferance? And, being here, are not your estates and effects, plundered from our nobles and gentils, the king's lawful property? You are, virtually, his bondmen! Your bodies, as well as estates, are at his

disposal; and your wives, children, and serfs, only belong to you by his favour.'

'I thank his royal highness,' said Jocenus, 'he acts as though this were our unhappy condition, as did his father before him—I mean King John. Yet, ill treated as we are the great body of the Christian people under his highness. *They* suffer as we suffer. They are separated from natural ties, cut off from social intercourse; dragged to dungeons, put to ordeal, mutilated, and hung—at the caprice of any baron. As regards us, there is a natural law which we will maintain with our best blood if necessary. No father, husband, or son, among us, who will not resist, to death, the injuries of those whom he is bound to protect!'

'Your words remind me that I have heard,' said the prince, 'there is a sort of white devil in your house a beautiful sorceress who practices her spells in songs of exquisite sweetness. You must guard her well in this disorderly town.—Aha!'

'Noble Prince Edward, will you contract with me on fair terms?' exclaimed Jocenus, 'I will meet you at the hall of Judaism to-morrow, at noon. In one of the chambers, there, my scribes shall pen the deed betwixt us—which shall be lodged, the counterpart, in the public chest of the chirographi, and the original document in this on which I lean.'

'Peril of thy beard, execute it without treachery or sorcery in French,' said the prince, 'and I will meet thee—place and time as thou hast said. Should I find any falsity in the act, you know the penalty—your lands and chattels, are forfeit, and your life is not worth a hind's ransom.'

'Whether my charters are executed in Hebrew, Latin, French, or any other language,' said the merchant, 'they contain fair dealing between man and man.'

'Your Hebrew conscience is but scant,' said the prince. 'Call you your high rate of usance fair?'

The merchant answered, 'The large rate of usance we claim for our monies, is but just, in consider-

ation of the fines which the people, among whom we are sojourners, put upon us. Let them place us on equality with themselves, and we shall take moderate profits. Now, earl of Lincoln, how say you? I desire to live quietly. Will you at the same place, meet me to-morrow, and look into the rolls of the chirographers, to ascertain the number of your bonds, and the extent of your mortgages? How heavy are my claims upon you, you know not. If you will come at that hour, I will make application for your bonds from the great chest, and will give you an acquittance of the whole, on your handing to me a charter of one of your lordships, and the castle thereof, with the manor house, including fees of rent and land, which shall be estimated by the mixed Jewish and Christian justices of the hall, and be found to come in to something less than the due sum total of your involvements. After that deed is lodged with the charters in the chest, I will further advance to you two hundred gold marks.'

'Look you!' said the earl; 'What I have said I will abide by. Figures I hate as much as Jews! If I have made too many bonds with you, I will mend that fault, I will have gold without bonds!' When he had spoken these words he went out, and was heard, exclaiming, 'Ho! dog of a torchbearer! light me up these cursed stairs, and draw the bolt of the house door.' Jocenus listened to his oaths, until they were heard indistinctly. The prince then resumed his bonnet, and turned to depart, as he said—

'You know that I had rather shoot you from a bombard into the teeth of pagans, than give this charter. See you are punctual to the hour of noon. When the refectory bell of the friars' rings for dinner, I shall be at the hall, with a learned clerk ready to bargain with you.'

'I shall be there in the forenoon,' said Jocenus; 'for our brethren hold there an assize of commerce.'

'Fare you well,' said the prior. 'You have said to me—words—that I will never forgive. Whether I at-

tain to an abbacy, or no, I have power enough to pull you down, merchant; and you may call me sincere, for I tell you, that I am your mortal foe!'

When the merchant was left alone, he stood in the middle of his office, with his eyes fixed on the archway through which his visitors had disappeared, and listened until all was still—the door of the house was slammed into its place—Caleb drew the bolt and lock, and his footstep turned away. The merchant was immovable until these sounds were past; then his lips turned ashy-white; there was a convulsive action in his throat—he tore his beard.

'Holy father Israel! The seven plagues of Egypt on these Nazarenes! I have more power to endure than is usual in man! If Judith, my child, did not come between me and my own heart, I should long ago have washed out my injuries in blood. Well, if Bishop Groteste will help me again, I may yet weather out this storm; if not—I must fly. I have not an instant to lose, for my child's sake! Her health and welfare are dearer to me than life! Who is without there?'

'I, master,' said Caleb, an elderly Jew, showing himself within the door.

'Bid Gesta follow me to my daughter's saloon, and see this room fastened.'

'Yes, master,' said Caleb.

Jocenus called the hound outside, which led the way to an ante-room. Jocenus entered a room of oriental magnificence, leaving the hound settling to sleep on an Egyptian mat, by the outside of the door.

Two lamps of pure silver, were suspended from the ceiling; and their mellow rays, gleaned on the matchless face and figure of Judith, the Jew's daughter. Her form was apparelled in a white gown, embroidered in flowers; and in a robe of superb dark blue velvet, with sleeves loose from the shoulder. She had armlets, each formed of a string of pearls, the ends fastened into a clasp of peculiar construction. A fillet of a double string of pearls,

fastened on the forehead with a similar clasp, encircled her head, and displayed its majestic outline. A magnificent brooch closed the robe on the bosom, constructed of a silver plate, upon which was a gold plate, smaller than the silver one, cut in two halves, fastened with twisted gold wire: on each gold half was set three sockets of twisted wire; in each socket was a pearl of superior value, and in the crown of each pearl a ruby.

The rich hair of the Jewess, perfectly black, fell down each side of her throat, and over her bosom, in shining curls. The colour of her cheeks were damask crimson; but her forehead was white as marble, clearly showing the blue meandering veins. Her mien was full of sweet dignity. Her dark eyes were reported abroad as magnificent; and they had inspired many a minstrel's fancy in the composition of his lays. But, if the person of Judith was thus lovely, how much *more* so was her mind!

CHAPTER III.

JUDITH's mother, Claribel, after having, twenty-five years ago, accompanied her husband into the principal provinces of Arabia, Greece, and Spain, came with him into England. Here they were entertained near the sea-coast. After leaving them, the Jew and Claribel travelled to Stamford, in Lincolnshire, where they found the Hebrew tribe numerous and wealthy.

In this town Jocenus met with a brother of his wife, reduced to indigence through the unjust conduct of Earl Warren, Lord of Stamford, who had just released him from a long imprisonment; during which, his property had become the prey of the earl's forces. Two of his three sons had been destroyed in an uproar of the populace; and his wife was reduced, by grief to depression and weakness.

Jocenus and Claribel undertook the restoration of the home of their relatives; and they were beginning to taste a renewal of past comforts, when both sunk on a bed of death.

The child, left to the charity of their brother and sister, was in a sickly state, and was placed out in the care of a nurse. This woman neglected it, and it died while she was inebriated with liquor.

The nurse lived in a cottage on the high-lands of Lincolnshire, to conceal her error she resorted to a noted witch. But, as she was going to the habitation of Myrza, she spied a deformed urchin creeping about the ground. The abandoned woman, seeing no individual near, snatched him up, and bore him away.

Claribel and Jocenus took up their residence in Lincoln; and, when they were settled, sent for the orphan of their departed friends. Both were astonished to see him so deformed; and could not recognise his pale features. Yet they suspected no deception; and the imploring looks of the deformed boy were answered by pity and solicitude.

Claribel died; leaving with Jocenus a girl of two years old, who was extremely beautiful, affectionate, and gifted. The widowed mourner devoted his heart and wealth to his daughter, whom her mother had named Judith. Claribel had named the orphan boy, Gesta; and, it had been her wish, that her husband should educate the children himself, and that he should make Gesta his mercantile assistant. Every wish of Claribel's had been held sacred by the Jew: and when she was laid in the grave, the cousins might be seen day after day sitting by each other's side at his feet, learning the language of their nation, its history, and the story of its sufferings.

When Judith was twelve years of age, she received from her father a Persian lute, as a birth-day gift; from this time she became a bard of the first order. Her progress was rapid in the science of music, under the instructions of the musicians of the synagogue; but she soon left their tuition to follow her unassisted genius, which vanquished the difficulties of the art as soon as they were perceived, and raised her power and pathos to a height seldom

equalled; and never surpassed. Among the persons who were of this opinion, was Lord Hugh, who had been introduced to the young Jewess, and permitted to hear for himself the minstrelsy, of which report had spoken in such glowing terms.

It was evening; in the west, the purple clouds were piled around the setting sun. The radiant girl sat on the broad coping of the balustrade, that bordered a low terrace in the Jew's garden. Her pure face beamed with inspiration, as she struck a prelude on her harp; her figure, so eminently graceful, bending over the golden frame. Never could Lord Hugh forget that figure—the enthusiasm of that hour. He was entrammelled by the romance of his feelings—by the place, the words, the voice; by the glowing loveliness of the Jewess; and by the intelligence of her father. Jocenus stood by the knight, listening with a heart beating fondly, as he gazed on his beauteous idol, and wished—oh, how he wished!—that Claribel could see her *now*. But Claribel was lying low; and little did the Jew anticipate that this fatal introduction of Lord Hugh would prove the means of her child's destruction.

Gesta, who had come for a day from a distant town, where he transacted business for his uncle, had thrown himself on the paving, at a little distance from the Jewess, and there he lay, shuddering under the intensity of his morbid feelings.

About this time, the ferocious earl of Lincoln, having failed in a predatory excursion in which he had been engaged, returned to Lincoln in a more violent humour than usual; and the priest of his house had been walking by the grounds of the Jew, and had heard the lays of Judith; he had said to the earl, that the witch on the hill, by the Jew's quarter, had such a sweet voice, as no mortal could hear without tears. The earl took advantage of this; and the innocent Judith would speedily have been consigned to a dungeon as a sorceress, but for the interference of Lord Hugh.

His kindness sank too deep into

the heart of the Jewess, and she cherished a gratitude fatal to her peace. Lord Hugh married the lady to whom the king had contracted him: and Judith languished on the borders of eternity. Gesta, during this period, was happily for himself, at a distance from the Jew's house. His acute feelings were spared much anguish. Jocenus had warehouses at Boston, a town thirty miles down the river Wytham, and there, as well as at Newark, his nephew spent the principal part of his time.

To divert the mind of Judith, and to gratify his luxurious taste, as well as to evince his fondness for his daughter, the Jew brought over continental workmen, and fitted up a complete range of apartments at the back of his residence, in a style half Moresco, half English—lofty, airy, rich—with eastern furniture and ornaments; suitable for the bower of a being like her for whom it was intended.

One day, the merchant brought to this bower a beautiful boy, and presented him to Judith, to see if she would know who he was. Her heart fluttered as she gazed upon his tall form, habited in a pink camlet frock. She drew him towards her.

'What is your name, pretty boy?'

'No,' interrupted her father, 'he shall not tell you his name; you are to guess it.'

Judith looked at his features; in his lustrous eyes rested almost as settled a delight as they might hope to wear in the regions above. It was an untarnished delight, that carried the feelings of Judith at once heavenward, where all is angelic love. She kissed his eyelids, and passed one arm about his waist.

'You can hardly see his face,' said the Jew, 'these feathers shade it.' And he removed from the boy's head a velvet cap, attached to one side of which was a black plume, that well contrasted his bright cheek. The Jewess bent over him in tears, and said.

'It is Sir Hugh—the heir of Lady Helen!'

The Jew was agitated as he stroked

the boy's fair hair, which was of the colour of the golden sea sand, when the sun is lighting up its diamonds.

'It is he,' said he. 'I saw him at play, and have brought him hither on the promise of a sweet song of Palestine, which you must sing to him for his father's sake. You know where your father is, Hugh, do you not?'

'Yes,' he answered; 'I know he is in the Holy land, and when I am a man I will go and search for him.'

'Then you mean to be a knight, and not a priest, Hugh?' said the Jew.

'I will not be priest,' said the boy; 'but I will be as brave a knight as my father, and say my beads for the love of heaven.'

Judith smiled, and the Jew laughed. Judith soon loved the boy; and he in the care of an evil man, was never happy but by her side. The Jew was compelled to regulate the child's visits with caution, fearful of the malignancy of the prior.

'Tell me,' Judith would say, 'darling Hugh, what shall I sing to thee? Shall I rise early in the morning to learn the lark's strain; or shall I wait in the garden to hear the nightingale, and get some spirit to teach me how to imitate its wonderful cadences, so mournful with bliss? Darling boy! I will learn for thee the music of winds and waters; and my harp shall sound as sweet as Druid harps of old, that monks tell, were hung on the branches of haunted trees, and played without mortal touch.'

To such extravagance, the boy would reply fancifully, clinging around her neck with enthusiasm—an enthusiasm, so fresh and happy, that many an older heart might have envied it.

CHAPTER IV.

'I SHALL not come back,' said the Jew to his daughter, 'until I have seen the bishop. After I leave the hall of Judaism, I shall proceed to the palace, that no time may be lost. Be not alarmed, sweetest child! I shall be late to-night; for there will be banqueting in the hall of the pa-

lace, and I may have some difficulty to obtain an interview with Grosteste.'

Judith hung on his shoulder; she had never felt so apprehensive before. Her alarm was visible on her countenance, and her father averted his eye from her, for he could not tell her her fears were groundless.

'Do not go to-day, father!' she entreated; but he was firm; for he had received information that the earl was preparing to execute his threats, and that the prior was urging on the former in the path of violence. The hound whined about his master's feet as though he was taking a final farewell; and, as the merchant glanced around the scene which he had created, he felt his heart sink with a presentiment that he should never see it again in happiness.—It was a presentiment too well fulfilled!

After he had departed, Judith called her cousin Gesta into the saloon.

'Cousin,' said she, 'difficulty and danger surround us.—Are the storehouses and the offices safely fastened?'

'They are, Judith,' said he.

'What do you think?' she inquired. 'Is there much cause for fear? Will my dear father return safely? Hark! What is the matter?'

A noise in the street made the Jewess turn pale, as she sank on the cushions.

'The followers of Earl Warren, and others, are pouring into the city for the banquet this evening,' said Gesta. As he spoke the cries of the soldiers could be distinguished—'A Warren!—a Beauchamp! &c.'

'Go and see if the court-gate be secure, cousin!' exclaimed Judith. He went to assure her mind; for she trembled; although he knew that Caleb had undertaken to fasten it after the merchant.

'I must see Myrza,' muttered Gesta, as he crossed the court. 'I know it was Lord Hugh whom I perceived this morning, leaning against our garden wall, outside. And if it were—'

He moved to the gate that opened

into the main street of the Jew's quarter—on the verge of it—and passed through quickly, when he was startled by the spectral figure of the witch close to him. It seemed to him she had followed him through the gate; and he addressed her, saying—'Whence woman! in the prophet's name—have you sprung from so unexpectedly? And what could you seek here!'

She laid her hand on his, drawing him within the court, and put her mouth and chin close to his ear, while every nerve of his body stirred in its place, under the influence of a repugnance which was awakened in his breast, when she chose to make approaches to familiarity with him.

'I seek you,' she said. 'O youth, what will be—will be. Come to my tower—all is prepared. The raven croaks—the owl hoots—the fire burns!' She raised her wand, and drew up her form, the thinness of which was set off by a much worn pelisse and gown of black serge. 'Come—come,'—she repeated earnestly—'you shall be my successor—and a greater magician than ever wielded a magic wand!'

'Psha! I have told you often, woman,' said Gesta, 'that I will have no part in your mysteries.'

'Speak low—hush!' she exclaimed, glancing her fiery eye around, under a scarlet mantle that covered her unkempt red hair: 'such things are not for common ears. You know,' she resumed in a whisper, 'that I can raise you above humanity!'

Gesta shook her head and said, 'No Myrza—no, no! You could not prevent the suffering the pain which I have seen you suffer; how can you lift me above suffering? You cough fearfully, all your magic cannot relieve you! You waste with that flow of blood from your chest—you cannot stop it! You are famished for want of bread—you cannot supply yourself? You lost your only child, you say—and you cannot restore it to your arms! No, Myrza, you cannot raise *yourself* above humanity, therefore you cannot raise *me*.'

The witch exclaimed malignantly, 'Dare you deny my power? Fool! Madman! I will thicken thy blood with fen-dews, and make thy joints stirless in their sockets! I will blast thee into—no, no,' she continued, 'I will not hurt him;—how can I? My own child might have been like him!' Her eye rolled fiercely in frenzy; and Gesta experienced a sensation of alarm, which was turned into some feeling akin to pity, when her fury subsided, and her thoughts played around the chord which had been stricken.

'There it is,' she said. 'The loss of him, who was to have been to me—what now you must be—has eaten up my heart! Never has his tongue called me mother! that name, perhaps he gives to a stranger, while I am desolate! When I lie upon my straw pallet, and winds blow, and rains fall, he does not tend me, as sons should! When I gasp his name he answers me not! And when I petition for food, to them who will not give it—because I am a witch—he never wrings it from them!' A burst of tears followed these words, interrupted by the convulsions of internal pain. Gesta attempted to console her, but she waved him back with violence, and stamped her foot on the stones.

When the fit subsided, the witch leaned against the wall of the Jew's court yard in exhaustion; but she contrived to speak, gasping forth her words at intervals—

'If you—will follow—my directions—you shall be mighty. To have my favour—is—a—' here a choking attack of her cough came on; the moment it was overcome, she went on, 'I will not be denied! What will be—will be. You are *fated* to succeed me—I see it in the setting of your eye, and in the lines of your forehead. Come before the midnight bells are rung in the monasteries: for, when the moon is in the mid-sky, we must commune with spirits.

'Woman!' interrupted Gesta, 'why you have conceived so determined a partiality to *me*, I know not. Perhaps you know not yourself. One thing is certain—I am not

to be seduced into becoming a wizard—neither by entreaties nor by threats. I have my own anxieties and sorrows, and they are heavier than those of mankind generally. We shall be observed. Where, 'headed, looking without the court, 'is the sigil which you promised me?'

'I have brought a charm most potent for you,' replied the witch, 'you shall have it to-night, when—'

'No more of that,' said Gesta. 'I am wearied of the idea! Only give me the aid which you long ago engaged to give me; and for which, see, I can liberally reward you.' And he held up before her a purse, and rattled the coin within.

'Put it back within your sleeve!' she exclaimed with scorn, turning from him, her breath free, but still short. 'I could get you the keys of whole mines of gold, which lie in the earth, under your feet, if gold be your idol!'

'Gold is *not* my idol,' he said. 'But take my money—the whole of it, and give me the sigil to-night; you can buy what you need with it, for your comforts. You have shown me kindness, Myrza, however mistaken it be; believe me, I am not so loved as to overlook this on your part. Take the purse.'

'I will not! Never shall sordid gift of yours cross this hand of mine.'

'I beseech you, take it,' repeated Gesta, 'to buy meat, drink, and clothing, which you so much need.'

'Youth!' she exclaimed, 'who will sell me these things for money? Will Catholics? Nay; they will say, she is a witch! aoint—and they will cross themselves, and leave me to starve. All will not do so; but I know not where to find those who will not. Are Jews more charitable to me? No, no—put by your purse.'

'Since it must be so,' cried the youth, tucking it within the sleeve of his garberdine. 'Well, Myrza, at midnight I will come to you. Lord Hugh is—I suppose you know—returned.'

'Earl or churl,' she said, 'are alike to Myrza. The swineherd's slave, and the fennman's serf, are as much to me as these nobles and

princes, which the world raves about like a drunkard in his sleep. Yes, and they are *more* to me; because they suffer under oppression from these high-born lords. A churl has given to me a manchet of bread, when I have been hungry, and a cup of ale when I have been thirsty; but nobles let me die parched. Churls curse—but throw me a cast-off mantle for my body; nobles curse too—and leave me to the bitter blast without defence. Awaken your thoughts; teach them the greatness of your destiny: you shall be above emperors and popes!'

'You forget, woman,' said Gesta, 'that I told you what had occurred between me and the confessor of this Lord Hugh, as the good priest was on his way to Palestine—but you do not hear what I say.'

Again stretching out her wand, the witch exclaimed, 'No, my adopted successor, my thoughts are where the magic circle awaits you; where the snakes of Hela sleep; where the misletoe, plucked from the oak, lies surrounded by charmed fire.' Her sunken eyes flamed with enthusiasm, as she concluded these words, and turned away from him. Gesta, after he had secured the gate, passed through the storehouses to feed the horses and hounds, and to perform other duties; after which, he re-entered the house, and retired to his own chamber, meditating upon his engagement with that mysterious woman who had left him.

The Jew had not only educated the intellect of his daughter, but also her imagination. Upon the wall were hung Arabian and Hebrew lyrics, in letter of gold on Egyptian paper; and near them were suspended two instruments of music, one of six the other of eight strings, upon which the two maidens of the Jewish lady often played, accompanying their mistress in sacred airs.

The civil law of the Jews forbade the use of images; but Jocenus little regarded the prohibition; and statuary was prevalent among the ancient Hebrews in the palace, the tabernacle, and the temple.

'Beloved daughter,' said the mer-

chant, when he led her into this gallery, 'our tribe are too much occupied with self-preservation to disturb my variations on the customs of our brethren; and, were they not, we have no visitors: none but ourselves can tell what is within this house. Here, away from the strife of the world, you, my fair girl, may spend some happy hours, when the weather does not permit you to wander in your garden, which is your favourite resort. See, in each side of your oriel's recess I have placed a gilded pedestal, inscribed with your favourite Scripture sentences in Hebrew; and, on each pedestal I have poised a winged angel on tiptoe, in the act of flight; each angel four feet high, of silver, holding wax lights. Between the pedestals, under that stained glass, rests my Judith's ottoman of crimson velvet, and before it stands a little ebony table, scrolled in silver lilies and roses, for your music, books, or work. Among the figures ranged down each side of the gallery's length, I have provided vases of semi-transparent alabaster, and other beautiful substances, which your cousin Gesta has filled with plants to delight you.' The Jew pointed out the principal statues which he had brought from Italy and Greece, and descanted upon their merits. The Jewess listened with all her soul awake; her melancholy eyes filled with a dreamy delight, and she seemed to belong to a better age.

'Ah, dear father,' said she, 'what an exceeding art is this! which produces such imitations of the finest of Jehovah's works! The marble is not dumb to me; neither is it cold. The eyelids of stone are soul-spirited; the stirless lips, spirit-touched. The first tell me of an intellectual calmness that is immutable; the last speak of the deep stillness of passions departed: whose morals are treasured under the serene expanse of the forehead, where seems to rest all that my spirit thirsts to know.'

'Yes,' said the Jew, 'here my Judith may sit surrounded with

classic images of beauty—here her imagination may acquire symmetry and grandeur—and here her ideas may become enlarged, to apprehend more of that Eternal Mind which invented the *first* models of all that she admires below.'

Judith, while her father was at the bishop's palace, in danger, entered the library, which was connected with one end of the saloon, and passed under the silken hangings between the pillars into the gallery. There, she threw herself on the ottoman under the stained window, the rich tints of which enhanced her glowing beauty, while she recalled to memory many a sweet hour, now doomed to return no more.

CHAPTER V.

FEARFUL and flushed, Judith remained on the ottoman during the most part of this afternoon. The tears were springing to her eyes, and often she turned her head, listening for her father's step—which came not. She felt it impossible to break from the spells of memory which enchained her mind. All the merchant's love and care appeared in the brightest colours. All the leisure that he had been able to snatch from trade, had been devoted to herself and her cousin. The information of his mind had given wings to many an intellectual hour. Upon this ottoman she had leaned on his breast, while he described her mother, and speculated upon the ecstasy of a future meeting with Claribel in the bowers of paradise. By the gilded table of the library, she had stood listening, dumb with wonder, while he turned over many a valuable manuscript, and discoursed upon the rise and fall of nations, upon the fulfilment of Hebrew prophecies, and upon the origin and progress in this benighted world, of that grand truth, the ONENESS of the Deity. In the saloon, on his cushion, he had sat listening with the ear of a poet, to her cantos, sang with the harp, in the Hebrew language; and his praises had encour-

aged Judith's two maidens in the choruses, which his finely instructed voice had aided; 'Praise the Lord for ever, the God of the whole earth is he!' In these words Judith seemed to hear that manly voice once more rising around, echoed back by the roof—it brought tears from her eyes, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed to herself, 'If, O, if he should be in danger, my heavenly Father shield him!'

Her two maidens entered with refreshments, of which they entreated her to partake, with expressions of kindness. Judith thanked them, and endeavoured to taste the delicacies they brought; but anxiety had deprived her of her appetite. Keturah, a dark girl, of spirit, presented before her lady a tray, containing a roll of rice bread: a pearl-handled knife, a silver spoon, and a fanciful silver dish, raised on four lions, with pearl handles, emitting a delicious steam from a compound of the flesh of delicate birds.

Judith raised the half-filled spoon to her lips, but, her father in danger prevented her from swallowing the liquid. Keturah was dismissed with this part of the repast; and Belaset placed a silver tray on the ebony table, and handed from it a gold cup of the richest wine, spiced to the taste of the Jewess heiress with nicety. But this Judith refused. Belaset then replaced the cup on the tray in the midst of an inviting collection of cakes of preserves, sweetmeats, and foreign fruit.

Shortly after, being left alone, the Jewess resumed her meditations, when Gesta approached her. His cadaverous features wore their deepest gloom, as with abruptness he addressed her:—

'Your father has sent Caleb from the hall, and is gone to the palace, we shall soon know our fate.'

'And where is Caleb?' faltered Judith.

'Below in the court,' said Gesta: who added, 'he seems to think, that, in a few weeks we shall have to leave this residence.'

Gesta meant days, or hours, but

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durst not alarm his supposed relative by expressing his fears of the nearness of the evil.

'Ah, no,' exclaimed Judith, 'I will believe Caleb is too apprehensive. It would break my heart to be torn from these scenes. Remember, Gesta, in this abode you and I have grown to maturity together; here, your aunt, my mother, died; here, she bequeathed us to my father's love; and here, that father's love has poured for us its never ceasing streams from day to day. Could you bear to go hence?'

'To me,' replied Gesta, 'all places are alike; and no place is blissful but the grave.'

Judith was ignorant of the real state of Gesta's feelings towards her, and she said to him,—

'I think, cousin, that of late you have grown reserved towards me. There was a time when you imparted to me whatever interested or pained you; and I rejoiced when you rejoiced, and wept when you were sorrowful. But now, you cherish a grief—' Gesta paced the centre of the gallery before her; and Judith added, 'I am afraid that I have lost the friendship of my early companion; and if so, it is a loss indeed!'

'No, Judith,' cried Gesta, 'it is I who am unworthy of your friendship! How unworthy, you little know.' And he shuddered with hatred of himself.

'Had I talents,' he said, 'since I am denied the ordinary person of humanity, I might be happier.' And he walked backwards and forwards.

'Why are you so discontented?' said Judith. 'Why do you reproach Jehovah?'

'You cannot tell—how should you?' exclaimed Gesta. 'You, the lovely, the gifted! You could never guess at a despair like mine. Look at me, Judith!' he said, 'am I superhuman in mind that I should not loathe myself; and wear out day and night longing for death!'

He covered his features with his hands.

'Cousin!' said Judith, rising, and removing his hands from his face.

'Call me not cousin,' said he; 'I am a slave—a reptile!'

'If I do not call you cousin, I shall adopt the dearer epithet—*brother*.'

He was melted by these words of Judith, and more when she recalled with a silver flow of utterance, their childish play, and their dreams of fancy.

'O bethink thee of our many sweet communings together, concerning the secrets of universal nature. Bethink thee of our poetry, our songs, our tears, drawn up by moonlight's ravishment from our hearts. Bethink thee of the love we have given to flowers. Hath not the soft leaf of the heartsease, the golden threads of the lily, the fairy perfection of the forest flowers which thy hand has culled for me so oft—have not these been to thee unfailing volumes of knowledge and delight?' In this style she spoke to him; then went to a vase of porous earth, placed between two marble figures, one of a male, the other of a female, and took from it three flowers—the crocus, the violet, and the daisy—and put them in his hand.

'Consider the flowers of the field *how* they grow.' Her serious look gave tenfold effect to these words. She said no more. They had learnt to think and feel together. There was an intelligence of the soul between them.

He gazed on the three flowers and then at her.

'How childhood loves creation!' said he. 'Once I sought such gems as these with avidity, and welcomed the lessons they taught. But now, of what avail is it that I look on them? I cannot imitate their lowliness, innocence, perfection, happiness! Yon figures have caught my eye and *they* speak to me in a louder, voice than these flowers. The female figure seems to image you, the other, O how vile appears myself before it. Do but note the contrast, my cousin.' He yielded to strong agony, and his spirits bowed under the idea of his inferiority.

'Little did I think to see you so unhappy!' said Judith. 'Be assured

that you give way to illusions. You are beloved: intelligent and prosperous in your circumstances; what more could you desire?'

'Beloved! beloved! by whom!'

'By your uncle, by *me*,' said Judith.

'By you!' Gesta exclaimed.

'Yes, by me,' cried Judith. 'There is no one on earth so dear to me as thyself, except my father.'

Quick as lightning, the blood rushed from the heart of Gesta to his cheek, and back to his heart. His despairing eye, lit up with transport, and his voice trembled with joy.

'What!' cried he; 'is the mean Gesta, so high in your affections?'

His manner of expressing this speech would have informed Judith of the truth, had not a feeling at this instant revived, with force, and confused her. Yes; another individual, now numbered with the dead, was dearer to her than Gesta, though less dear than her father. She sighed as she remembered Lord Hugh. Her love for him had been high-wrought sentiment, but it had strengthened with her strength, and had completely engaged her heart.

The Jewess was disturbed; but passed into the library. Hope was extinguished in Gesta's breast, as soon as kindled. He imagined that now she had seen his passion, and treated it with contempt. But before she left the library, Judith stood beneath the hangings between the pillars, and smiled on him, inviting him to follow her into the saloon. He could not deceive himself: 'She knows not—cares not—whether I love her or no.' This was the sentiment of his breast; and he suffered the most poignant revulsion of the feelings; and the smile which she had intended should heal his heart only caused its wounds to rankle intolerably.

Judith retired for the present from Gesta's sight; but to his mental vision she still was present. His eyes remained riveted to the spot where she had just stood.

'Ah, that the former days could return!' he exclaimed: 'when I could be free as she was; when we

ranged the garden and field together.' He gazed on the crocus, violet, and daisy, which he still held in his hand, and which Judith had placed there for his instruction: 'Silent monitors!' said he. 'Modest teachers! ye shall lie next my heart, and there wither, where a passion for her who gave ye to me is consuming life and peace.' The three spring-flowers were disposed of as he said, while he was seized with a shaking that resembled an ague-fit, and his sharp visage grew more pallid. 'She smiled on me in *pity*,' said he. 'My deformities make her *compassionate* me. Oh, I would rather endure her hate than her pity!' In this strain he soliloquised, tormenting himself with the erroneous supposition that she had observed to herself the disproportion of his figure, at the instant when she paused beneath the curtains. He hated the day, since its light increased his admiration by enhancing the perfection of the queen of this bower, yet destroyed every chance of his success, by exhibiting to her his malformation.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE was a playful tapping at the door of the saloon, and Judith hastened to admit her favourite, Sir Hugh. He bounded into her arms, and looked importunate.

'My blessed boy!' exclaimed the Jewess. 'Welcome, ever welcome!'

His hands were placed each side her face; and as he met her look she was surprised to see his eyes sparkling proudly, and his mouth dimpling with pleasure, while his frame quivered under sensations of excitement, within the circle of her enwreathing arms. She had sat down by a fire-hearth, guarded like that of the library, and had drawn him to her lap before her.

They were an exquisite pair; the boy graceful, the maiden beautiful. His hair mingled in softness, with her raven curls, like sunbeams on a thunder cloud.

'I have something to tell you,' said he; 'and you shall guess what it is.' For some time he excited her

curiosity, until she pretended pique.

'Come then,' said he, 'I must let you know that I saw a stranger sitting on a bank of the priory green this afternoon. What do you think was his dress?'

'Provoking child!' said the Jewess, 'how should I know?'

Hugh was subtle in prolonging his amusement; after stimulating her curiosity, he said—

'If I were to put on such a dress as he wore, I should do it this way:—my esquire should bring my sabatynes, that is my steel clogs; and when they were fastened on my feet, he should cover my shins with greaves; next, he should hand me the cuisses, and the overlapping pieces for below my waist, which are the *taillettes*.'

'Why, it was a knight you saw!' cried Judith. Hugh went on with a smile—

'I have only put on my dress up to the waist, yet. Now, my esquire—so ready—clasp on my cuirass,' and the boy straitened his figure, and made his chest more prominent, pointing, to indicate the breastplate. His aspect assumed so much manliness, and his attitude expressed so visibly the valorous spirit which he inherited from his father, that Judith could not refrain from catching him to her beating heart; but he broke away from her, saying—

'The vambraces are put on;' he pointed to his shoulder, 'and the *rèrè-braces*;' he spread out his hands, 'and the gauntlets;' he touched his side, 'and the short-sword;' he turned to her ready to reveal his secret, 'and now I have my *bacinet*, my long-sword, and my shield, and a red surcoat is thrown over my armour, for—I am a crusader.'

'You are deceived—it is impossible!' exclaimed the Jewess, rising as if about to flee, she knew not whither.

'It is true!' cried the boy. 'My father is come back!—I have seen him—he is a noble knight, accoutred in steel, but covered with a crusader's hat and cloak.'

Judith sat down; and for the in-

stant closed her eyes in forgetfulness. Hugh prattled breathlessly—

‘He took me on his mailed knee, and kissed my forehead, and said I was his lovely child; and asked me if I was glad he had come back from the wars. I asked him who he was, and he said Lord Hugh, my father.’

As the boy mentioned that never-forgotten name, Judith's forehead sank on his, and she breathed with difficulty.

‘My father said to me, where are you going from your play, and who takes care of you? I told him I was going to see the Jew's beautiful daughter; and that she and the hermit, by the river, took care of me; but that I lived in the priory, and should be glad when I went from there. He said I should go away from there, for he would make a knight of me! He asked me, lady, your name; and said, when I told him, Judith—love her, boy, for your father loved her; but he said the prior meant me harm, or he would not let me come to you so readily.’

The walls of the saloon were hung with blue silk, like the drapery in the library; these were drawn up in festoons, with blue and white cords, gold tasselled; and the fringe of each festoon was of gold. The walls were painted in fresco, representing on one side the children of Israel crossing that flower-laden and solitary river, Jordan, when descending from Arabia Petræa, to take possession of Canaan; on another side the temple of Solomon, and the procession of the queen of Sheba; on the third side, Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz; and on the fourth, Esther drooping before the king of the Medes and Persians.

The Jewess, overcome by agitation, struck the wall on her right thrice with her hand, lightly. Her maidens entered, obedient to the call; and Judith kissing the boy, entreated that he would return immediately to the priory; then signed to Belaset to support her into her chamber, for she felt ill. Hugh was all eagerness to see his father again; and quickly he pulled his cap over his fair brows, and tripped away.

The warm weather had set in early. A fine jet of water was raised in the middle of the garden, and a rivulet adorned with cress, rushes, and green turf, enamelled with blue flowers. The bright boy stopped now and then to pick a pebble or a rush from the rivulet, as he pursued its course to the bottom of the garden, singing to himself, and then, when he remembered the crusader's figure, and the words, ‘I am Lord Hugh—your father,’ leaping and running along with glee.

The rivulet terminated in a well, near a door in the lower garden wall, by which Hugh always found admittance. A frame was erected over the well, by which the Jew's servants drew up water, and this was its only guard; grass grew over the edges, and the stones of its sides were decked with fresh moss and ground-ivy.

The young Sir Hugh had seldom visited the Jewess without stopping here, and he stood looking down as if in a dream, enchanted by the verdure below, and by the sound of the drops that trickled over from the rivulet.

A silver-rimmed hunting horn was fastened to the girdle around his waist, and a silver chain crossed his breast. His cap was off, and filled with pebbles, clean and polished; red, blue, and white; elegant rushes and simple flowers. These were now spread out by the well, as he lay on the grass. The murmuring of the water continued for a time to entrance him, and the noise of the breeze, in the beech trees, revived the growing sensibilities of his soul.

With nose close to the soil, Sylvio, the greyhound, trotted along the path by the rivulet, and gave a bark of joy, as he descried the boy half reclining on his side, close by the well. Quickly the dog lodged his head on the knees of Sir Hugh.

‘Ho, Sylvio!’ cried the child: ‘I thought I should not go out of the garden until you had found me.’ He patted its sides: ‘Your coat is white, your shape is fine, Sylvio; my father will love you as much as I do.’ The fondling creature licked

the caeeks of the young nobleman, who proceeded to inform his canine acquaintance, that his father was a renowned Knight, who had fought in Palestine against the infidels, who had returned in armour, and who would now make a warrior of his son.

The dog heard all this with attention, making a sound that was remarkably significant of pleasure. Hugh next repeated certain portions of one of the Jewish lady's affectionate lectures, given to him when he had been disposed to imitate the practices of his ruder playfellows of the city streets, by tormenting inferior animals.

'What do you say, Sylvio,' cried he, peering laughingly into its half-shut eyes, 'shall I push you into this well, and be cruel to you, because the monks tell me I am your superior?'

The gentle sentiments of the Jewess had made a deep impression on Hugh; and since he had heard her speak on this matter, he had contracted a friendship for her greyhound, and for every dumb creature belonging to her, Sylvio still remaining his favourite.

The hound darted off, and rolled on the sward; then darted back, and stood still, as though waiting for the boy to resume his converse with him, which he did thus, in nearly Judith's own words:—

'You must know, Sylvio, you were given to us to be made happy; and if we abuse our power, and render you miserable, there will be a sad reckoning for us at the day of judgment.' Sylvio wagged his tail, and for anything Hugh could tell, understood clearly what was said.

'Hark!' cried the boy, 'do you hear that?' There was nothing to be heard but the murmuring of the water, and the wind; and regarding these sounds, Sylvio maintained a happy indifference. He escaped from Hugh's grasp and ran away, shaking his coat, and sneezing.

'Come back! here! Sylvio,' cried the child. The greyhound had gone some distance on the path; he looked at the boy—trotted a few paces

back—stopped—pricked his ears to catch the whistle of Sir Hugh, and was directly by his side again. Faster fell the shadows of night, inviting thought and feeling to heavenly themes. The boy, lying on his breast, was hanging over the well, trying to pluck from the side a piece of moss, that was softer than the rest, and exhibited a more beautiful emerald green colour. The May moon arose bright, before the last streaks of the sunset had faded in the west. The vesper star of evening was increasing in lustre, opposite the Jew's garden.

The private door, in the wall, was pushed open, and a figure of a crusader's hat and cloak entered cautiously. The stranger's ear distinguished the half-howl of a dog, close by; and glancing his eye toward a well on his right, he perceived a white greyhound, mounted on the frame over it, and looking into the dark chasm, with unquiet motions. In the neighbourhood of that well, Jocenus, the merchant, had often parted from this stranger, years ago. The latter was not slow to remember this; and he wept now; for it was that very season of the year when the Jew and himself had been intimate, and the very hour of the day when they had been accustomed to separate. The merchant had attended him from the house as far as this spot, to converse with his friend for as long as possible; and often, when their steps had at last brought them to the parting place, they paced the sod by the well, or stood by the private door, until the heavens were spangled with stars, and the dews were falling. The delicate sarcasms of the Jew, wittily levelled against the inconsistencies of popish superstitions, and the belief in sorcery; his descriptions of eastern countries; his penetration and foresight; the largeness of his charity for mankind, and the fervency of his affections, these had fascinated and surprised his listener.

'I am happy,' said the stranger to himself, 'that I find this abode of knowledge and of love, secure and happy as I left it.'

The greyhound sprang from the frame of the well. It was Sylvio. The knight recognised him. The motions of the dog were singular, and the stranger noticed them with curiosity.

On the grass, by the well, were scattered a dozen pebbles, and some beautiful rushes seemed falling over the edge. The hound smelled every pebble, with closeness; then with his paw turned over the rushes snuffing loudly; next he scratched the ground, barking and howling: and after this ran off along the path by the rivulet, and stood barking as though he meant to call for assistance from the house; now he came back to the spot where the pebbles lay, licked the rushes, and made a lamentable whining; and lastly he jumped up on the frame, and again looked fixedly on the water in the well, all the while replying to the greetings of the stranger only with cries of mournful meaning.

The knight became convinced that the dog wished him to look into the well: he drew near, and gazed down. The water was enveloped in blackest darkness; but the stranger withdrew not his eye; a few moments, and the moonlight returned over the well; by the time it reached the middle, the stranger had discerned three or four snowdrops floating on the liquid in the cavity; when it had illuminated all the dark circle with its silver rays, he understood that it had been disturbed by the descent of some substance, which still lay at the bottom of the water. No suspicion of the sad loss, he had this hour sustained, entered his breast! He was resting on the idea that his son had returned in safety to the priory, or was still with the Jew's daughter. He anticipated meeting Hugh upon one of the garden paths, in the care of Caleb, who might be about to attend him as far as the priory grounds. But the knight and the Jew's daughter were never more to see the sweet boy—never more to delight themselves with his gay caresses!

The stranger endeavoured to entice the dog to follow him up the

garden, but failed;—Sylvio would not leave the well-frame. The former proceeded by the rivulet, stepping on the foot-tracks of his son, until he reached the jet of water in the middle of the garden. Here he gazed about him. All was as he had last seen it; and the whole appeared as though it had been transplanted out of Tuscany. He stood on a green open space; on his right was Judith's arbour, and her ornamented stands, adorned with stone, brass, and fluted urns and vases, on his left was a white marble funeral monument to the memory of Clari-bel; before him, in front of the terrace of the house, were spread flower-parterres, surrounded with fruit trees, in blossom, intermixed with box trees; and, behind him, the wooded lower part of the garden, consisted of handsome straight walks all terminating in a lawn like the central one.

The knight's cloak barely permitted his scaled mail, and his scabbard, to be visible toward the foot, his hat shadowed his features; and he was covered with the dust of travel. He advanced on the right, where many a tiered Asiatic flower grew in the classic vessels on the ornamental stands, and increased the foreign aspect of the scene. The knight observed these with the eye of a traveller, as the moonlight stole down through the leaves, to shine on the urns.

'Ye are far from your own climes,' thought he; 'happy am I that I return to mine! Ye have suffered under the bleak sea winds of this variable island. But I, I rejoice once more to be in England! The harshest blasts here, would be delicious to me—more delicious than the most incomparable airs of the Persian vales, or Araby the Blest!'

The plaintive notes of an air sweetly broke the silence. The voice which so exquisitely breathed them sounded from the neighbourhood of the arbour. The singer was the Jewish lady; it was her instrument, the fine strings of which trembled in enchanting accordance with the

tones that issued so tenderly from her lips.

Judith knew not, the knight knew not, that it was Sir Hugh's dirge she sang. Her voice became overpowered with feeling at the close of the last verse: the strings ceased their vibrations, and the knight walked towards the ornamental stands, while the cloud, which a little before had, in pity for a father's feelings, obscured the well, again threw its shadow around his figure; he imagined he heard a footstep close by, and stopped to look about him, but only saw the trees, the silver fall of water at the fountain, and the polished stands, which caught the rays of light that escaped the gloom. Yet he was confident there was some one near his person. He advanced.

Judith's notes had ceased; she had rested her harp and sunk into a mournful reverie. Sylvio darted by the knight to his mistress, and took up his wonted position, placing his head on her knee, and looking up into her face. Judith acknowledged his presence by laying her hand on his head, without disturbing the melancholy current of her thoughts. The most tender reflections engaged her mind, excited by the intelligence of Lord Hugh's return, and coloured with a sombre hue, partly from that sadness which always accompanies deep thought, and partly from hopelessness of a return of affection.

Judith had been preserved from mere flatterers by her secluded way of life, and her acquaintance with better things. Those who had ventured to propose were dismissed without hope, for with her, love retained its original freshness. When she felt the most for Lord Hugh, she felt the most for creation, for heaven, for eternity. When passionate feelings had swept over her, then she was most lowly; her genius penetrating into all bosoms that came within her sphere, sympathizing with all—loving all—instructing all—spiritualising all. Love blended its sighs with the heart-breath of the universe, and as an odorous breeze

passed and repassed over her soul, and fanned all its buds into flowers. It might be, her affection was not suitable for this polluted world—nor fit for the common wear of every-day circumstances.

The knight stood in silence gazing upon the Jewess. The moonlight showered down its light, silvering in streaks a stream by her feet, and tingling her forehead, and the Maybells that slept by the side of her harp. Some one stumbled over the roots of an oak, behind a stand near that on which Judith sat. Sylvio barked, and she arose, exclaiming, 'Be quiet, pretty creature; it is my father!' Next moment, a figure she knew too well was by her side; and the crusader took her hand with animated delight: 'Lady!' cried he, once more we meet—once more I see you after all the distresses, mischances, and dangers I have undergone. This moment repays me for all; ever blessed be that Providence which bestows it.'

'My Lord Hugh!' was all Judith said; and the apparent coldness of her manner chilled the knight, who remembered he was a Christian—she a Jewess; that she was, perhaps, the richest heiress in the land—a fine woman and a minstrel; and attached to her own people more than in former days—whilst he was a professed warrior of the Holy Cross; a poor knight, with nothing of his own but a renowned name, a zealous faith, and a portionless son.

It was not the knight who had fallen over the root of the oak, for, as he stood silent, holding the hand of Judith, both heard the pressure of a foot on the gravel, and the creaking of a bough, as though some hand had bent it. Both stood motionless; the bough seemed to be let go cautiously, for it made three sounds at intervals while rising to its natural position, and there rested.

'By your leave, lady,' cried the knight, with suspicion, 'there is some intruder here beside myself;' and he strode around the ornamental stand with his hand on the hilt of his sword. He found an alley leading to the house, along which he

paced. 'Who is hid here?' he cried out, but there was no reply. 'Some one has been dodging my steps all the evening!' he cried again. 'If it be an enemy of mine, come forth to the light, or you are a craven, unworthy of a brave man's weapon.' These words had no better effect than the former. The knight drew his sword and examined the darkest parts of the alley, but he found nothing more than rose-bushes, flower-pots, wall-flowers, dwarf-box, and here and there an image. He leaned upon his weapon, and listened, looking down the alley. A scream from the Jewess caused him to return to the spot where he had left her. 'My Lord Hugh!' she exclaimed, 'protect me!'

'Lady, *who* has dared to alarm you thus?' he cried.

She turned up the alley, saying, 'I will explain, my lord, when we reach the house; where, I hope we shall find my father, to give you the welcome I know his heart will feel.'

Belaset and Keturah met their mistress on the terrace; they appeared astonished at the sight of an armed knight attending her. Judith felt under the necessity of making some explanation. The Jewess was alive to the responsibility of her station, and could not endure to be lowered in the eyes of her servants.

'Belaset, attend my Lord Hugh to the saloon,' said she; after learning that her father had not yet returned. 'Sir,' she added, turning to the knight, 'I am rather discomposed by the fright I have had in the garden; permit me to retire. The walls in the saloon are newly painted, and there are some foreign caskets on the table, those may entertain you. Your friend, my father, is momentarily expected; in the meantime, I will venture to express much in few words—you are welcome.'

Lord Hugh chose to remain on the terrace, that he might overlook the garden awhile. Judith withdrew; passing under a moresco porch, and ascending a number of polished steps to her chamber.

At the door she parted from her maidens, after directing them to send Caleb to examine the garden with a lantern. She had drawn the bolt on the inside, and stood looking on the eastern carpets on the floor. 'Have I seen him once more?' she murmured. 'Is it true, my heart? Have I looked again upon his face? I never could recall his features perfectly to my memory, perhaps, because too much feeling disturbed the resemblance; a troubled stream can never reflect clearly—but methinks I shall never forget them. Only once I glanced at those features, but that single glance was enough for a lifetime. I am fearful that I behaved childishly. I could not endure that Lord Hugh should think I love him. Not for the world would I have him guess it! He seemed affected by the meeting between us, and I believe he half-meant to allude to—to *past* feelings. They were brief, foolish, sorrowful; let their remembrance die. He is below—well, what a world of change is this! I have lost no dear friend by death since my infancy—dear mother, would thou wert living now! I have known no poverty, and but little sickness; I have escaped all the dangers which threatened our people from the Nazarenes; I have scarcely stirred beyond one precinct of my garden—yet I could imagine that no life was ever so crowded with incidents as mine. Instead of having existed but twenty-four years, I could think I had lived as many centuries. My father is late, but I will not be alarmed, for Belaset said that the banquet was not yet over. Who could it be that darted from the alley to the opposite side of the lawn? I imagined I saw the garments of a priest as the figure crossed the stream of moonlight that was illuminating my seat. It is strange!'

Keturah knocked at the door; she panted out her words, 'My dear mistress!' The Jewess was unable to inquire what had occurred. 'The stranger, Lord Hugh, I think you called him—' 'Yes,' said Judith, 'what of him?' 'He has gone—O

how I tremble—with Caleb into the garden to search for the prior of Icanno! 'The prior of Icanno!' repeated Judith. 'Yes, my dear mistress; both Caleb and Lord Hugh saw him, they say, hiding among the bushes. I am sure his errand is no good one: every person knows Prior Taylor to be a bad man. It is said he has done something which lies heavy on his conscience—but that is a mystery.'

'Peace, good girl,' said Judith, sitting on the edge of her bed, and pondering what she had heard. 'Surely it cannot be long now before my father comes back to me! Hark! was not that his step?' 'O no; he is not yet come,' said the maiden. 'Go and see, Keturah,' said Judith. The servant went, but returned to her mistress with an answer of disappointment. 'Caleb and Lord Hugh,' she said, 'had returned to obtain another candle for one of their lanterns, and they were going to lower lights into the well.' She had heard them whisper by the terrace steps, and had gathered a few unconnected words which she repeated to her lady:—

'Something had fallen—Sylvio—the well-frame.' 'I can make nothing of this,' said Judith. 'Where is Sylvio?' 'I have not seen him,' replied Keturah, 'since little Sir Hugh went away this evening: I saw Sir Hugh go into the garden, and presently Sylvio followed.'

'You saw Sir Hugh and Caleb go into the garden you mean,' said Judith, 'for the boy was not alone.'

Keturah hesitated; then said, 'I believe—I think, my lady, Caleb was packing up the goods in the storehouses. Sir Hugh said, as he passed me under the porch, 'good-night, Ketty—you will see me wear the spurs of a true knight, some day.' I laughed, but he took off his velvet cap and whirled it over his head. 'I will give you a gay kirtle,' said he, 'when I ride with my taffeta-banner, waving aloft, my arms shining on it, and on my mantle and scabbard, with the device of the princely Gants, the gold portcullis bars. Ho,' he cried, 'Ketty,

that will be a day for me! He leaped out on the terrace as he spoke. My noble father,' he continued, 'shall ride before me, and all men shall honour him, as, *afterwards*, they shall honour me.'

'This Lord Hugh is his father,' said Judith. The girl was about to speak, when Judith prevented her by saying—

'Keturah, you are aware it is nearly half a mile from the garden of this house to the priory, and the way is of an unsafe description. I am sure you know I would not have had the boy go alone, especially on this night. Being so faint when he left me, I trusted to you.'

The housemaid, who was attached to her mistress, felt distressed by the consideration of her own negligence. What was she to do?—the truth could not be hid. Caleb was to the present moment ignorant of the boy's visit this evening; and assuredly Sir Hugh *had* gone from the Jew's house alone. Judith could scarcely control her apprehensions that harm had befallen him, and appeared displeased with Keturah. After giving her some duty to perform, she threw herself on her knees on a cushion by the bedside; and endeavoured to compose and fortify her heart.

CHAPTER VII.

THE resolute character of Jocenus had, during the past day, been of service to him in his dealings with the prince, at the hall, where the business of the Jews was publicly transacted. In the chambers there, excitement prevailed, as might have been expected in the disturbed condition of the city. Many Jews from distant towns, and the metropolis, crowded the hall, and endeavoured to force bargains with the needy Christian nobles, who pressed thither before the banquet, held at the palace. During the early part of the day, the avaricious Hebrews gained advantages for themselves, but in the afternoon, the aspect of things changed, and there was a very ominous movement to their prejudice: some were charged with theft,

others with treachery ; taunts were levelled against the Jewish nation ; and insults and scoffs were given and received. In the midst of this confusion of tongues, Jocenus was assailed, as he wrote with his clerks, by a repetition of the bitter language of the preceding day. His daughter was alluded to with alarming innuendos ; and the apprehensions of the merchant increased. He knew that the prejudiced populace abhorred his people, and only wanted some pretence to fall upon them with fury, and to seize their property.

Under shelter of the Bishop Grosteste, it was, that the Jews of Lincoln had enjoyed an almost undisturbed possession of such rights as the laws of England allowed ; while in Stamford, in Huntingdon, in York, and other places, the massacres of Hebrews by the Christians, the wanton destruction of their homes, the violence done to individuals from private animosity alone, and the plunder of property, were facts too terrible to be contemplated. But now the return of the sanguinary Earl of Lincoln, with his followers, made the resident Jews of this city tremble : still they looked upon Jocenus as a sort of prince among them ; and, knowing his influence to be great in Christian circles, they felt safe, so long as he was so. On the other hand, though the merchant had no intimacy with any of them out of the concerns of trade, yet he acted well for them on all occasions ; assisting the poorer with money, the weaker with his power, the fearful with his counsel, and the oppressed with his intercession, which often proved successful in their favour.

Prince Edward did not know the temper of the man whom he had to deal with ; he endeavoured, by an overbearing demeanour, and assumption of superiority, to awe the merchant into a compliance with his terms ; but Jocenus met him with firmness. What he had determined to do he expressed, and he would do no other than that. After an extraordinary contest, carried on with decision on the one side, and

with princely arrogance on the other, the royal heir gave in to the merchant's arrangements, and the charter was drawn out in due form.

As soon as this was done, the Earl of Lincoln, with another baron, made way to the commercial apartment of Jocenus ; and abused him. Still the Jewish merchant stirred not from the ground he had taken. He persisted in his resolution to lend no more to the earl unless satisfied concerning that individual's past engagements ; while the latter had his own reasons for not desiring to be put in mind of these.

A little before dark, the public part of the hall was closed ; at which time Caleb was waiting upon his master, and received from him important commands. The servant hastened to the house of the Jew, and the latter to the palace, from whence he returned to his apartments in the hall, in an hour, and again saw Caleb.

'Inform my nephew,' said Jocenus to his servant, 'that I fear I shall not see Bishop Grosteste on account of the banquet ; but that to do so, I shall hazard my life, if necessary, that I may obtain his protection for my daughter. To-day has increased our danger. There is a terrible storm muttering at a distance. I may be under the necessity of removing Judith to some spot that may be safer for her at present. Perhaps,' he said 'Boston, or Newark, would be secure places, she could, in a few hours, ride to the latter, or go down in the galley to the former. Request Gesta to direct you how to act with the goods in the storehouses ; they must be as much prepared as the time will allow, for any emergency. Leoni, my acquaintance in the Strait, will accommodate me by taking charge of the most valuable, which we can remove after midnight, when the quarter, in which we live, is hushed by night.'

Darkness had enshrouded the city before Jocenus a second time left the hall. As he went out, he gave the evening salutation to some persons standing near the threshold.

'Monks are familiar with you,' said one of them. 'Prior Taylor is not too zealous for his faith, or I should suppose he was endeavouring to convert you, and your family,' said another.

Jocenus inquired the meaning of these words, and was informed that the prior of Icanno had been seen several times watching near his garden gate; and this evening he had entered; a little while after he came out, and entered again with two other monks.

Jocenus felt uncertain how to act, but judged it best to proceed as though he had not heard this. He ascended the street which led to the episcopal palace. On the top of the ascent appeared the cathedral. Just below, on the slope stood the palace, a most beautiful building, occupying three wide courts with gardens and terraces.

As the Jew passed up the Strait, a street so named on account of its climbing the steepest part of the hill, his ears were saluted by the sound of bands of minstrels, from different countries, who had arrived in the trains of the prelates assembled in the palace.

There were Welsh harpers, Irish and Scotch pipers, troubadours, singing Spanish legends, borrowed from that land of poetry, Arabia, and now translated by monks into Norman-English; German minnesingers, reciting their own sweet compositions; story-tellers, fascinating their listeners with tales of love and knight-errantry, employing the most marvellous incidents, and splendid scenery, to fix the attention; and many others. A hundred torches flared around, producing a wild brilliance; by their light were seen groups of people, of the lowest classes, listening to ballads in Saxon-English; also feudal military dependants, jesters, with bells appended to their caps, monks, and knight templars. The last mentioned possessed a part of a large extent of waste land, east of Lincoln, where they had procured for themselves a settlement.

Nothing attracted the merchant's

attention, for he was occupied with considerations as to the success of his errand, until he heard the following words repeated twice by some one near him: 'Lord Hugh has been seen to-day in the lower town.' Jocenus endeavoured to discern the speaker; when another made answer, 'Yes, by the mass, the prior of Icanno may look to himself!'

'What is that you say?' inquired a hermit; the same whom the young Sir Hugh had been accustomed to visit. 'Has Lord Hugh been seen in Lincoln?' He spoke tremulously. The two men who had spoken mingled with a crowd; and a woman dropping a curtsey, said, 'May it please you, good father, I this morning saw Lord Hugh below the Strait, in the High Street, I know him as well as my own father, though he is a little altered for the worse; he was once as fine looking a knight as any in Christendom, my mother often says'—

The Jew had not time to hear the conclusion; he walked forwards, animated with hope; 'If this be true,' said he; 'if my Nazarene friend be once more here, I fear little; unless he has altered since we parted last, and that I will not do him the injustice to suppose. Yet hearts *do* sometimes change with change of climate. And what saith our Scripture, 'Put not your trust in princes.' Ah!' he cried, 'well I know that song! Claribel sung it to me in Spain!'

The Jew's quarter was on the slope of the hill, on the farthest side of the Strait, and the palace walls were on his right, beyond a large green, used for rustic sports and executions. It was on this green that the Jew when he uttered the last exclamation, saw a female minstrel sitting on a heap of turf, singing a moorish ballad in a faint voice; only a few listeners had gathered around her, for the more powerful tones of her competitors had eclipsed her powers. The finest piece of melody in the world, could not have moved the heart of Jocenus more than this ballad; his heart swelled with anguish; the tender look of

Claribel, as, between twenty and thirty years ago, she had sung the very stanzas he now heard, was remembered by Jocenus; even the playfulness of her smile; the shining of her tearful eyes; the light pressure of her hand on his shoulder—every little minutia of that hour arose in distinctness before him. At *such* a moment, when the Jew was involved in thought, and was about to incur a risk of no little magnitude, then, did memory weave her spells, and steep his spirit in sorrow. 'My beloved wife!' he exclaimed, 'thou art as dear to me now as at that hour!' and with an acute pang he thought on their long separation.

'I shall see her no more!' he said. 'The grave has hid her from my sight for ever! We were together but a few years, and then she was snatched from me without warning. Of such perishable materials are the best joys of this world made! O my wife—my wife! Twenty-two years hast thou been lying in thy cold, lonely grave—whilst I have pined for thee. It is for *her* sake,' he added, 'that I have so fondly loved her daughter! It is for *her* sake I will hazard property and life to protect that daughter!'

Palfreys, mules, and war-couriers, were heard neighing in the palace stables, as Jocenus entered the western court. The hoofs of armed horses, galloping into the court—the warlike greetings of their riders—the halloos of servants to each other—the loud whispers of parties of monks, conversing on anything but spiritual matters, beneath the cloisters; these blended with the carols of two foreign dwarfs belonging to the Prince Edward, and the legate of the pope; with the jesting of pages and esquires, and with the clattering of dishes, trenchers, and drinking-vessels, in and about the kitchen, and buttery-hatch. Eight lofty windows, ranged in the lower story of one part of the buildings of the palace, exhibited to the Jew the grand hall.

The merchant stopped in the shade of a buttress, opposite the

hall, and endeavoured to decide on the course best to be adopted in case the bishop should decline to interfere on his behalf. As he stood, two persons approached, whom he knew to be guests arrived to do honour to the feast. Not perceiving the Jew, they stopped almost close to him, and addressed one another in low tones, thus:—

'My lord, it is a fact—the most extraordinary since papal domination began—that this Lincoln bishop sets at nought his holiness and the king; he defies spiritual and temporal authority, when they interfere with what he considers his pastoral duties; and nothing can turn him aside from his reforming habits. Lately he has brought on himself the animosity of a body of monks, by examining into their way of life, while many superiors of religious houses detest him, on account of his having compelled them to govern their monasteries better, to occupy the pulpits of their churches more regularly, and to visit their flocks.

'He can be no common man who has the boldness to attempt a reformation among the dissolute priesthood, whose lives are a scandal to the name of Christians.'

'Groteste is no common man. His piety is sound, his zeal for the best interests of the church to which he belongs, never sleeps; and his temperance is so remarkable, that it has become a popular subject for ridicule.'

'Temperance!' cried the second speaker, pointing to the grand hall.

'O my lord, this feast is given by the legate of the pope, who seems to have taken possession of the palace,' said the first. 'He is here on some secret errand, boding no good to the bishop. It is not expected that the night will pass over without some discovery of his intentions; but whatever they be, you will see Bishop Groteste maintain his character for integrity.'

'He is very plain in his manners, I have heard.'

'He is so. He was born in humble life. His own power of mind, and his enterprising disposition have

made him what he is. He was first taken into a monastery in Suffolk, his native place, to run errands for the monks; there he exhibited so much fondness for study, that the superior took a liking to him, and taught him to read and write. When the boy had accomplished these first steps in learning, he went forwards, and travelled to France and Italy, from whence he returned furnished with every gift for his present responsible situation. Perhaps there never existed a man who was so loved, so feared, and so hated, as Grosteste. The pope threatens, by St. Peter and St. Paul, to make such an example of the old dotard as shall astonish the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury has excommunicated him. And at this hour the men at arms dispersed through the apartments connected with yonder hall, are receiving private directions from the legate. It has long been evident that absolute force or treachery alone could eject him from his see, and there is every reason to believe they will be employed; for this legate has interests of his own, as well as of his master, to serve, by the bishop's downfall. I apprehend that if such be the aim, the legate will have little reason to be satisfied with the result.'

'You excite my curiosity. I am impatient to be present at this festival.'

'My lord, many beside yourself will be there with excited expectations.' Here the two speakers turned into a vestibule, and were hid from sight; but Jocenus heard them speaking as follows:—

'To let you into a secret, Grosteste has one secret enemy—the prior of a house of black friars, situate at the bottom of the hill. He is full of ambitious designs, and has set his mind on an abbacy. Grosteste banns his progress to preferment at every step; and the prior knows that a watch is set on his machinations; therefore the rancour of his heart is not to be appeased but by the overthrow of his foe. Come, let us attire ourselves; the banquet is ready.'

Jocenus, when they had walked away, considered within himself, that since the bishop was in so critical a condition, it would be unlikely he could render him assistance. 'Yet,' thought he, 'I have no other resource. I am certain not to see Lord Hugh before to-morrow, at the earliest; and this night I must have aid!' After taking a few turns in the shade, he spoke with a page of the bishop, who had orders to announce a visit of Jocenus, the errands of the latter being of moment. The Jew said, 'Tell my lord bishop that life or death is concerned!' The page disappeared through a passage, vaulted and lighted; but returning, bade the merchant put on a monastic wrapper, draw the hood over his turban, and follow him. The Jew hesitated; while fearful thoughts crossed his mind; but the bishop being his only chance of safety, he gathered the garment about him with a shudder, and shortly after found himself elbowing the crowd in the lower end of the hall. The page lodged him in a recess near the dais, and whispered, 'Remain quiet; I will tell you when to approach.'

CHAPTER VIII.

VERY anxious, Jocenus gave a cold glance to the scene, though it was one of magnificence. The hall was of great length, hung on three sides with painted tapestry, under the windows, which were adorned with tracery. The fourth side exhibited a dark gallery over the entrance, filled with armour, disjointed and complete; some suits appearing like warriors, full armed, apparently guarding the entrance; on each side of which were carved screens, with lesser doorways, leading to the kitchens, through which a stream of attendants were entering, loaded with dishes, ewers, &c. On one side of the hall the tapestry was left off, where there was a chimney under a stone canopy. On each side of this orifice monks were piling wood, green with leaves, and brown with bark; while hand-irons of silver were laid in the middle of the hearth, for

the most choice boughs to be burnt on. Nearly opposite the chimney, was a gallery for minstrels, into which they were entering, each clad in the livery of his patron. The upper end of the hall, where were the chief tables, was raised above the flooring. This elevated part was covered with a tapestried cloth that extended a little below the steps, and on it stood four tables, placed transversely, as seen from the spot where the disguised Jew stood, and spread with rich cloths of state. Behind, were velvet and gold canopies, over the seats of the heads of the feast. Below the dais, rows of tables stretched to the bottom of the hall, between two rows of pillars of marble, which were connected with each other by flowered arches, supporting a gilded roof. On each side the dais, were cupboards displaying a profusion of plate of every shape and size.

Misty perfumes were now shaken from the censers, by the priests; music swelled around, blending with the sounds of rustling robes, armour, the tramp of armed heels on the floor, and the low hum of tongues. The excess of light dazzled the mind; while the glitter of the tables, and the splendid attire of the guests did not tend to allay its excitement.

Groteste did not enter to the banquet until all were assembled: then he came attended by a splendid body-guard, and by a train of ecclesiastics, friendly to his cause; his dress was rich and costly; whereas, usually, he persisted in preserving a singular plainness. His velvet gown, embroidered in silver lilies, widened out into a width toward the bottom, where it terminated in a train; the folds of which were borne up by two boys in surplices. His tippet was richly embroidered; and necklaces, with golden ornaments, containing relics, rested round the top of his shoulders. His golden mitre was on his head, and his pastoral crook was borne after him. Many of the guests stood up as he passed to the dais, but others sat still with disrespect. Some knelt in veneration, and the rest

whispered insultingly aloud, breaking the silence that would else have been kept until he had reached his chair. Six monks walked before him, bearing wax-lights, with great preciseness, and preceded by the bishop's verger, who was ready to clear the way for his master in case it should be obstructed. They passed the spot where the Jew stood, and Groteste, turning his head in that direction, Jocenus perceived it bore a different expression from what *he* had observed on it before. The prelate was in his sixtieth year; but the simplicity of his heart marked his countenance, till now, with generous openness. At present his eye was angry, and his lip stern; his robust figure seemed to dialate with indignation; and he muttered to himself, as he glanced on each side.

The merchant felt his heart sink as his fears whispered to him that his suit was hopeless; but determination served him instead of hope, and he waited with impatience the approach of the page.

Prince Edward appeared under one of the canopies, at the elevated end of the hall, in armour, diadem, and necklace; at the table by him sat his knightly friends, each with his rich banner pendant over his head, and his shield and lance hung by it. The legate of the pope, occupied a second high seat, attired in a gown and cope of purple damask, wrought in coloured silks, with scarlet hose, and round hat with strings, as cardinal. The bishop filled the third, and central place of distinction: and no sooner had he done so, than the dishes for the feast were brought up to the steps of the upper flooring. Jocenus looked among the crowd, but could perceive nothing of the page; he summoned up all the fortitude he could command, and endeavoured to divert his distressed thoughts by observation of what was passing.

The marshal of the banquet stood on the top of the dais steps, and the carver stood beside him, with a napkin fringed with silver, and wrought with an episcopal device, hanging over his arm. The taster stood near

them : and this trio received every dish and tasted it, that the assembly might be secured from the prevalent custom of poisoning. The marshal took the dishes into his own hands ; the carver uncovered them, and dipped into the contents a piece of bread, which he handed to the sewer, who tasted it, and afterwards gave it to the bearers of the dish that they might partake. The trenchers, spoons, and napkins, laid on the tables, before the seats of the guests, had been examined by the marshal. All the officiating persons aided the splendor of the banquet by their costly dresses. Trumpets flourished at every fresh movement they made ; and Latin verses were sweetly chanted in chorus.

The recess in which the Jew stood, being near the high board, afforded a shelter for pages and servants. Jocenus was called back to the sense of the peril in which he stood, by detecting among those about him, a gay esquire, whom he knew to be in the service of the Earl of Lincoln, looking beneath the cowl which was drawn over his head, and whispering significantly to a companion. Presently some one jostled the merchant, and a voice muttered in his ear, 'Infidel ! thy beard betrays thee !' Jocenus turned round, but could not discern the speaker. a dread crept over him, which he found it difficult to shake off.

The tables were now spread with delicacies, elaborately adorned with pastry-work, and made to represent castles, monastic houses, ships, animals, and creatures of fancy ; the plainest dishes being placed on the lower boards. There were no substantial pieces of meat to be seen ; but all was cut, minced, and mortared, into messes.

'These Christians,' thought the Jew, 'forget the lesson taught them by the Israelites of old ; when they would be indulged with flesh by their Maker, he sent, as a consequence, leanness into their souls.' He added with scorn, 'The souls of most of these banqueters, Jehovah knows, are lean enough ! Did the Galilean whom they profess, sit at

tables like these ?' he shrugged his shoulders. 'O the prophets !' cried he : 'see the inconsistency—a poor Jew who had no where to lay his head, worshipped in this manner ! He gave them no authority for what they do, neither by example nor by precept.' This reverie was disturbed by the rushing of apprehension over his mind, overwhelming all his thoughts. Again he mused :— 'These hanker only after the bread that perishes. What is that to me, now ?' At this instant a yeoman said, in the hearing of Jocenus, 'Do you see, Garston, they have given the bishop the principal place ; would you have expected that ! The person to whom these words were addressed, was the keeper of the gaol, a man of prodigious strength, dressed in a new leathern jacket ; his head presented a savage appearance, which was not improved by a squint of the eyes ; his voice resembled the growl of a wild beast. The answer which he gave to the person who had spoken to him, was accompanied by a frightful leer, as he laid his forefinger on one side of his mouth and nose, and raised his shoulder, 'Give the dog his dinner before you twine new hemp round his throat ! I can scent that bait,' said he.

At this instant, all being ready, Bishop Grosteste arose, and advanced to the centre of the elevated flooring, to bless the feast ; while down the central aisle every earl, knight, priest, and lady, bent the knee, in what appeared to be devotion. Grosteste spoke from the heart an unpremeditated prayer of his own composition, in Norman-English, and using many expressions in it unwelcome at present, which occasioned a murmuring.

At about the middle of the third high course, the Jew beheld the page who had introduced him to the hall, go on the dais, and approach his master. The latter whispered to his servant as if asking a question, to which the page made a gesture of assent ; both looked toward the recess, and, soon after, the page touched the merchant's elbow, and

led him to the bishop, who, taking advantage of a confusion that occurred, spoke to him :—‘How now—take heed thou get no harm without. What is the matter, that you think it worth while to break in upon me at high festival? Hast thou not seen that the bishop is no longer the lord of his own palace? The legate, man, is lord here!’ Jocenus answered quickly, with real feeling; ‘My lord bishop, I have seen, and heard, that which has pained me for your sake. Apart from your state, I know you, as all know you, to be a man worthy of the name; upright, just, and as yet, powerful.’ He then added, ‘I am in danger, my lord bishop—I and mine!’ The bishop answered, ‘By the Holy Cross, so long as I can, I will protect the oppressed, be they who they may. Who is concerned?’ ‘The prior of Icanno, and the Earl of Lincoln,’ replied Jocenus. ‘Indeed!’ cried the Bishop. I guessed mischief was rising somewhere. There is more in this than thou canst perceive. For mine own sake I must inquire into thy compliant. Step back among my servants; I will speak with you again.’

The merchant was well pleased with this reception; and he was about to whisper to the bishop, that the prior was hiding in his garden, doubtless, with some evil design, when Grosteste turned, engaged himself at the table before him. The Jew followed his directions; and holding the cowl of the wrapper he wore, close over his chin, so that only the upper part of his face was to be seen, fell back a few yards, and mixed with the attendants of the bishop.

The hall was filled with persons: knights, monks, and ladies, sitting at separate tables; the highest ranks at the upper end; and so ranging downwards, by a regular gradation, to the bottom of the hall, where were placed inferior persons connected with the government of the town. After the tables were cleared of the dishes used for the more substantial part of the dinner, they were loaded with beautiful confec-

tions, fruits, and gold and silver wine-cups. The cry of ‘Wassail! Wassail!’ was raised in the midst of the hall by the steward, who bore a bowl of huge size, filled with a mixture called hypocrass; composed of wine, sweetened and spiced with many ingredients. The marshal walked before, uplifting a long wand, gaily adorned; and he himself was preceded by a minstrel belonging to the palace, who sang—
 ‘The wassail-bowl in the hand bring we,
 With garlands gay, and rosemary;
 I pray you all sing merrily,
 Qui estis in convivio.’

It was now an animating moment for all but the Jewish merchant, who was uneasy at the delay which was retarding his return to Judith. The bowl of hypocrass was placed on the chief table before the bishop and legate. The grace-cups were all filled by the steward from his hypocrass, and handed round by the cup-bearers to the guests. A signal was made, and every person turning their faces toward the seats on the dais, drank the health of the prince. ‘Long live the noble Edward!’ was a cry followed by the heart-rousing clamour of trumpets, clarions, and other musical instruments. They ceased; and the legate was drank to; then followed another burst of music, less warlike in its expression, being performed by the choristers; and, after a Latin chaunt, there was silence again. Now approached the period that had been anticipated by some of the guests with curiosity, and by others with heated affection, that longed to express itself openly. The bishop’s health, prosperity, and long life, had been proclaimed as the next toast, when a division took place. The legate kept his seat, and his cup stood untasted before him; his example was followed by his train, and by the principal number of the other monks and ecclesiastics. The Earl of Lincoln called on those connected with his house to imitate him, and, elevating his cup, he threw out the liquor on the ground. This act of animosity roused the other party, who made the roof ring with their heartfelt shouts. Meanwhile,

the bishop, with his restless eye, now filled with all the energy which belonged to his character, marked those who were his enemies and those who were his friends. The tumult had only a little subsided, when he beckoned to a supposed monk in waiting, and whispered, 'Hie thee away to the room where we have before conferred : I will come to thee in an hour.'

'My lord bishop,' said the Jew, 'even this night may the earl's myrmidons be about my habitation. If you can help me, say at once.'

'You are bold, sirrah Jew !'

'My child, lord bishop ! I ask protection for her—if you can render it, as you have rendered it before, say so—for while I linger here the prior—'

The bishop interrupted him ; 'You ask for aye or no : I say No, then ; for I see that I cannot serve you.'

'Then Jehovah guard my daughter !' said Jocenus. 'Farewell, my lord bishop.' He was turning away when Groteste caught him by the shoulder ; 'Is your danger so pressing ?' he said.

'My child, lord bishop,' rejoined the Jew, 'what will become of her.'

The bishop looked down the hall in silence for some minutes, then turned to Jocenus again, and said—

Be satisfied ; I will come to thee in an hour. By the Holy Cross, man,' he continued, 'there is in this more than thou drest of. It is I, merchant, it is I against whom thy foes aim principally !' He added with drawn breath, half soliloquising, 'but I will sit in my bishopric as firm as King Richard, the Lion Hearted, was wont to sit in his saddle ! and it shall take a bolder man than any here, to unseat me ! aye, by the Holy Cross ! Sirrah page !' The latter having received orders from the bishop, his thin figure was seen passing down one of the side aisles before the Jew, who heartily wished himself safe in the apartment to which he was about to be conducted. Before they reached the side-door, they were compelled to stop, for another change in the

ceremonies of the evening had taken place, and the lower end of the hall was impassable. The minstrels had left the gallery, and were taking their seats round a table prepared for their entertainment, apart from the company ; their dresses were laced with gold, and they wore scarfs across their breasts, and caps with feathers, on their heads. Before they began to eat, one of their number sang a popular strain ; but it excited no attention, for all the guests were occupied with what concerned their bishop. The disappointed singer leaned his head nearer to his friends, and whispered, pointing toward the high seats at the upper end of the hall, 'What is all this to us !'

'It is something to us !' cried the nearest individual on his right hand, 'for there will be no minstrelsy heard to-night ;' then to console himself, the speaker laid his cheek to his instrument, and touched the strings to a new French air, which had taken possession of his fancy : while two Irish minstrels commenced a madrigal, one blowing the iron pipes used in his country, and the other playing on the harp which was shaped like a pair of compasses, but consisting of three sides. The signal was given, the minstrels began, and finished their repast.

The merchant, pressed by the people, lost sight of the page. His uneasiness increased ; but he kept near to the wall, and stood still, hoping that his conductor would, by this means, find him more readily. Every instant seemed an age to Jocenus ; for it was evident from the remarks and demeanour of the assemblage, that some crisis in the fate of Groteste was at hand ; and the indifference of this stranger-monk to what was passing, and his close-drawn cowl, began to excite suspicion, especially among some of the enemies of the bishop, whose passions were excited.

Two heralds now entered the hall with display ; and Jocenus heard them raise the cry of 'Largess !' at the foot of the dais, as they each shook on high a golden cup. Amid

the loud flourish of trumpets that ensued, he heard the names of the three distinguished individuals who sat at the state boards, proclaimed; and the clamours at the cry of the bishop's name, exceeded the former. The ladies were alarmed, and were all led from the hall by their protectors, who were not long in returning to the scene of tumult. Great numbers of the servants of the barons were sent out with private directions; the monks drew back the tables in disorder, and some of the seats were overturned; when Prince Edward, who had been looking on with curious eye and ear, raised his arm for attention, and his attendants demanded silence.

'By the faith of my body, knights and prelates,' cried he, 'this is the strangest festival to which I was ever invited! I beseech you all, if there be a quarrel among you, let it be deferred until to-morrow: at which time, in open court, you may decide upon the right or the wrong.'

Whilst he spoke, all eyes were fixed on the legate, who was about to draw something from beneath his robe, and who only waited until the prince had concluded what he had to say, before he spread before the assembly a letter of Pope Innocent the Fourth; at the sight of which there was a silence; some persons anticipating its contents with dread—others with pleasure; but nearly all bending before its authority as absolute. The hall was hushed as death. The two pages of the legate kneeling at their master's feet, held two tapers close to the parchment, which, as he was an old man, and dim of sight, he could scarcely read; but he looked on it with a smile that affected not the bishop a jot.

'It would be of little service, my sons,' said the legate, 'to read the whole of this sacred decretal which I unfold before you. I had not intended to make known the terrible edict it contains,' (here he looked towards Grosteste) 'until to-morrow; but, Prince Edward,' (turning to him) 'the manifestation of opinion here to-night, induces me, for many reasons, to declare the truth. I cer-

tify to you all present, that this decree contains the LAST BAN against Robert Grosteste, Bishop of Lincoln; and I require, as the representative of his Holiness, Innocent the Fourth, that he renounce his dignity, and quit his see.'

An indescribable sensation spread through the hall; every one looking at his fellow, observed the paleness of his cheek.

'Will your Eminence say what are his crimes?' demanded the Baron of Croun.

'With your permission I will answer that,' said Bishop Grosteste, smiling, 'I *myself* will answer that. Friends and foes! I have neither allowed myself to be awed by the menaces of Pope Innocent, nor corrupted by court favours. What was just, I have pursued; opposing the pope's will and the king's pleasure, when that will and pleasure have been set against the good of the church, and of my diocese.'

'Long live the good Bishop!' burst from thousands of voices within and without the hall. The legate changed colour and trembled, as these sounds reached his ear, and died off at a distance. It was an unprecedented circumstance, that at the instant of the issuing of the papal thunders, they should be defied. Grosteste was no more disturbed by the clamours of his friends than by the bitterness of his foes. He stamped his foot and waved his hand for silence; then said in sounding accents—'Thanks, friends! Thanks—certain of my enemies!' (for some of the adverse party had joined the huzzas.) 'I am little capable of setting forth my own cause; yet TRUTH need not be garnished with shows of eloquence. Who among you accuse me of a behaviour in my diocese, unmeet for a Christian bishop, who waits to give an account of his stewardship before the tribunal of heaven! All silent! Not one voice uplifted against me! Speak *now*, my enemies, bring forward your charges! Not one tongue wags against the bishop, of all who have been witnesses of my conduct, since I took in hand this pastoral staff.

Then, legate, I ask if the best benefices in the kingdom have not been bestowed on Italians, who neither reside among their flocks, nor can speak or understand one word of English?

This was a question which the court of Rome was desirous of preventing being discussed, lest all the English clergy should resist the pope in a body.

'Why parley we here!' exclaimed the legate. 'I ban thee, Robert Grosteste, from thy bishopric, in the name of his Holiness! and all who take part with thee are enemies of Rome.'

'Not so, your Eminence!' cried the Baron of Croun, 'we are not enemies of Rome, but friends of truth and justice!—Say on, Bishop.'

'Say on!' was reiterated down the hall.

'I say then, to this assembly,' continued Grosteste, 'I have told Pope Innocent that he ought to be ashamed of his flagitious conduct—in sending to bribe me to advance a beardless, unlettered stripling—(his nephew, to be sure)—a gay Italian, who wears his cassock with a grace, and makes himself delectable with perfumes; but not worth a florin in purse, or a single idea of his own in wits—to one of my most rich and populous livings.'

A louder murmur than ever arose, and many were heard inveighing against the conduct of the pope.

'For refusing to do this,' said Grosteste, more loudly, 'I have been excommunicated by his Holiness's orders—by the convent of Canterbury—and now comes the cardinal-legate himself to *force* me from my see! Doubtless some *friend* of his—(a foster son, or a brother, belike)—is anxious for these rich revenues which I hold—(Lincoln is a prize for a churchman!)—but, by the Holy Cross, I will clap on a helmet when my mitre is taken off! and let us see my friends, whether God, and my right, with this arm, shall not answer for me.'

A burst of applause, ringing through the palace, made the cardinal feel choked with rage, as he

turned down the hall quivering in every limb.

'Varlets! ho! lights to my chamber!' cried he, raising his voice almost to a scream.

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCE Edward refrained from interfering in the strife that took place in the banqueting hall, and he withheld the chief number of his personal friends from making any expression of their sentiments on the occasion. The truth was, he was aware that the power of Rome had become domineering, and must be checked; and he was not sorry that the legate would be able to inform the pope, that there existed one man in England, bold enough to slight his threats. The prince was not angered by what the bishop had insinuated to the disparagement of King Henry, his father, for he knew the weaknesses of that monarch, and he was more intent on preparing for his own kingly dignity, than on upholding the dignity of his parent.

Most of the lights were struck out in the hall. The bishop whispering in the ears of some of his friends, and, pressing the hand of the Baron of Croun, who had so spiritedly confronted the legate, prepared to hasten to his apartments, to cheer his sister, the Lady Isabella, who resided with him, and who was listening to every shout, with dismay; after which, he purposed to acquaint the Jewish merchant with what he had decided upon for his protection; but, before he could leave the hall arms were resorted to by the barons, and wounds were given and received.

'In the king's name, I charge ye desist! and let this matter be decided hereafter,' said the prince. The bishop uplifted the cross, and, finding both parties becoming more violent, cried—'In the name of a higher than an earthly king, I command you to forbear!' But other quarrels had mingled with the ostensible one; and it was some time before the supporters of the bishop would hear his voice entreating for peace.

In the meantime, the page found

Jocenus, with some trouble, and said—'hasten!—lose not a moment!—leave the palace—or you are lost!' Before the Jew could ask from what side he was to expect the evil, the young man had advanced before him to a private door under the tapestry, which opened on the vaulted passage that has been before noticed. The merchant followed without difficulty, but not without increased alarm; for the throng, composed of the town functionaries—prejudiced men—gave way for his passage, while they pulled one another by the sleeves, and whispering passed among them as by contagion: 'Hast been at mass to-day?' said one: 'Not he!' said another; 'he has been eating pork.' Jocenus, by this allusion to the much ridiculed custom of his people, of abstaining from that meat, perceived that he was known. Thoughts of his child unnerved him—but the same thoughts made him strong again! He stepped into the passage with an easy mien, and took no notice of the mockery of the persons gathered about him. Just as he walked into the court, near the kitchens, he lost sight of the page, who had been called away on some pretence by the earl of Lincoln's esquire.

The soldiery that loitered about the courts—ripe for any mischief—joined to press forward the unhappy merchant to the great kitchen, where the monkish disguise, which he had so assumed, occasioned a deal of merriment, that Jocenus feared would end in something more serious; and there were reasons for his fears; for his assailants were numerous, ferocious, untempered; and accustomed to every cruelty and license. By what means a knowledge of his person had been communicated, he had neither opportunity nor composure to determine; for though several monks, with the chief cook, strove to persuade the men who were annoying him, to permit him to pass out through the courts in safety, they seemed more determined to wreck their passions upon him:—'Why came he here, the misbeliever!'

cried one piling a number of faggots of wood, in the middle of the space attached to the kitchen, in which employment he was aided by others; while a leather thong was thrown around Jocenus, so that it pinioned his arms to his side. About twenty individuals were concerned in this part of the affair; and even with the efforts of so many, it was not accomplished without difficulty.

'For shame, sirs!' exclaimed a friar, whose feeble remonstrances made no impression whatever—at least none that proved to the advantage of the merchant, who was soon bound hand and foot.

'The virgin keep us!' cried the same friar; 'the sinful man will be into those flames, if some one does not prevent. Alas, what shall be done! Our good bishop cannot interfere; he is too distressed himself! Alas! who will assist? Though the sinful man be an intruder among Christians—though he have no right to come here, on such a night, too—yet it is frightful to think of such a deed! What shall be done?'

'Reverend father, be pleased to interfere in the buttery-hatch!' said the head cook. 'A swarm of rascals, belonging to the earl of Lincoln, have broken into the cellars, and are letting the best wine from the casks!'

'Alas, they will not hear me!' cried the friar. 'Hark! the language of those soldiers makes my hair stand on end! I know not which are the worst infidels, they, or the Jews, whom they injure.'

'Holy saints!' exclaimed the cook, 'who have they bound there? And why have they kindled my faggots in the court?' Whilst he spoke, the blaze rose, fanned by a breeze, and showed with picturesque effect, the dark sides of the building, the rough countenances of the artillery and bowmen, animated with savage delight; and, amid their numbers, Jocenus bound, but still erect; his visage streaked with blood, that trickled from a contusion on the forehead, which he had received during his struggles with those who had fastened the thongs about his

person; the pupils of his eyes were dilated, expressing contempt, mingled with more than a tiger's fury—but his lips were mute. Repeated roars of laughter sounded on his ear, and it was easy for him to imagine himself in some worse region than any supposed to be on this earth.

The friar replied to the cook, 'It is a Jew, whom they have found in a priest's cloak, in the grand hall: and what they have lighted the faggots for, you know as much as I. Alas! I fear—'

'Holy saints!' exclaimed the cook; 'they will not burn the poor wretch, surely! Will not the legate's people interfere, to prevent such a frightful outrage, within this sacred edifice?'

'There is no order to be seen in the palace!' said the friar; 'worldly and spiritual affairs are mingled; and neither humanity nor religion can be heard. The legate's people will have nothing to do with those men, who are the earl of Lincoln's retainers, because the earl is on the legate's side; and our bishop's friends are occupied with what is passing in the hall. What is to be done?'

The intentions of the soldiery were not so bad as suspected! the fire had been kindled to torment the Jew with terror, and to burn the monkish habit which it was supposed he had contaminated by wearing. This garment was plucked from his shoulders with shouts, and consumed: his turban was trampled under foot and his tunic rent. During the hubbub, Jocenus found himself dragged to the scullery, beside which was a trap door, left open; through this dark opening he was thrown headlong backwards into a cellar used for kitchen purposes; and again rose frightful laughter! Some stone steps were visible to Jocenus on one side of the cellar, as he got on his knees on the wet floor; and the thong that had bound his legs having given way, he contrived to reach the steps, and sat down on one nearest the ground. Here he was pelted from above with the remains of the materials that had

been used in the preparations for the banquet; and the attack seemed likely to prove fatal, especially taking into consideration that his frame was injured by the fall, and by cuts which it had previously received.

Death is awful when near, under the most favourable circumstances; but it bore to Jocenus a most terrific aspect! To perish by such worthless hands; in so unprepared a state; in the full possession of health and strength;—it was horrible!—then, Judith! there was no bitterness comparable with that produced by the thought of leaving her without a lawful protector. Gesta occurred to his mind; but something within him whispered, 'No; I am not content to leave her in his care; he has shown too much warmth of sentiment for her.' Yet, again, Jocenus felt thankful that his nephew was with her; it was a brief consolation! pain and rage distracted his mind; and *eternity* appeared before him in horrid darkness! No glimpse of light cheered his soul, which was seized with a sickness at the prospect of the dread world upon which it was so fearfully driven.

'Baptize the infidel!' was shouted amid the laughter over his head, and accordingly quantities of ale were flung on the distressed Jew, which much increased the merriment of his tormentors. 'Kneel, Jew—kneel! Eat, Jew—eat!' was vociferated, accompanied with dreadful oaths, by the whole band, as an artillery-man, stooping down, thrust through the trap-door a piece of brawn, and two spears, tied with a crucifix at the end, by means of which contrivance he managed to goad the merchant. 'Show him the fiery pillar in the wilderness!' was echoed around; and a heap of flaming combustibles were thrown into an ale barrel that had been emptied during the early part of the feast, and which was now cast into the cellar; it dropped on the floor, and rolled to the side farthest from the step upon which Jocenus was resting, where there was a heap of shavings, and branches of trees

which it ignited, to the horror of the Jew, who still uttered not a word. 'Here are Moses' laws on stone! Here is bread without leaven!' was shouted, as a couple of paving-stones were hurled by the men into the orifice, with a shower of stones. Jocenus fell on his knees, covered with blood, and sheltered his head, from similar attacks, under his arms. 'Jehovah! thou Mighty One! thou Merciful! Be a father to my child!' he exclaimed. 'Pardon all the errors of my life—all my breaches of the law—all my secret sins! I am at the borders of death! O most compassionate King of the Universe! I am in a fearful extremity! Deliver me! or receive me to thyself?'

'The bishop!' cried out Garston, the gaol-keeper, from one extremity of the court; and the cry was repeated with alarm by the soldiers, who allowed the cooks and servants to approach, and, by pouring into the cellar a deluge of water, to extinguish the flames that were rising from the heap of fuel. There was a cessation of hostilities. The important personage who presented himself among them, and for whom they fell back in disorder, proved not to be the bishop, but the prior of Icanno. He saw and heard how affairs stood, and how they might be turned to his advantage; reproving the soldiers, he walked into the scullery, and unbolted a door at the top of the cellar steps; then called upon the Jew to arise, and come up!

'Another time thou wilt beware of venturing into places like this!' said he. His words were loathed by the faint Jew; who, even at this moment, had too keen a sense of the prior's hypocrisy, and malignancy; fiery indignation was in the merchant's heart, to which alone he yielded; and, though existence was a thing which, when he was about to lose it, he had gasped for; and, though Judith was so much the object of his anxiety, that, for her sake, just before, he would have accepted life at the sacrifice of all he had, yet, now this indignation, combined with scorn, overmastered all

other feelings; and he neither stirred a limb, nor answered a word in acknowledgment of the prior's exclamations.

'Rise, fellow! Come up, I say!' cried the prior. 'Thou art neither dead, nor deaf! Rise, blasphemer! or take the consequences.' His tone encouraged the ruffians about. 'Up with the Jew! up with him!' they shouted; and at the same moment a potsherd cast down from behind the prior, smote Jocenus on the temple, and laid him senseless!

The prior desired at this juncture to ingratiate himself with all who were leagued with the legate against the bishop; and though he had not been present at the banquet, yet he knew who those were. All who were connected with the earl of Lincoln, too, he desired to please, at whatever cost of truth and justice, the principles of which he only made use of according as they served his interests.

'My friends,' said he, 'these are not doings which a good man may approve; the Jew is an infidel—a hater of the Cross; he neither reveres the blessed saints, nor the pope;—wickedness you all abhor; but then you have not acted right. He is an infidel, I say; accursed of God and man; but yet I fear that the bishop of Lincoln will punish you for this act.'

'We heed not the bishop of Lincoln, prior!' cried one.

'Well—well—' said the prior, as he looked down upon the body of the Jew, stretched out below, with the face downwards, scorched and bleeding, 'what is done—is done; but, should the bishop discover this act—so near the high feast, in his own palace—what think you? may we not fear that some *lives* will answer for it! Judge ye!'

'The bishop is banned by the pope—he is not bishop here!' cried Garston. The prior started! there was no torch-light near his face, to reveal its expression, or the dark smile which played about his lips, and took care that his voice did not betray his sentiments.

'But, my friends,' said he, 'Gros-

teste has so many who will still be ready to execute his judgments. I speak for your own sakes—you have done wrong; but I could wish that all the Jewish bloodsuckers, who draw away the money which should be yours, were exterminated! They are the plague of England!

'Aye, prior!' was now the outcry. 'Aye, death to the Jews! Death to the bloodsucking Jews!' The prior waved his hand—'Peace!' said he; 'or you will have Grosteste upon you. It is necessary you determine what shall be done with this cattif below!'

'Throw him into the river! Cast him into the castle-ditch!' were among the rejoinders. The prior looked perplexed, and passed his hand over his forehead in meditation. 'This affair must not be known,' said he. 'Will you follow my advice?' Some of the soldiers, who were less intoxicated than their fellows, were glad at any means of escaping the consequences of their violence, and said, 'Stand by us, prior—we will do what you advise!'

'Then first,' said the prior, 'swear by the Holy Virgin, on your swords, to be secret regarding what has passed. Those who have looked on must do so too, for the sake of peace.' All were ready to concur in this proposal, and the prior directed them to raise the body of the merchant out of the cellar, and to bear it away to the castle, he himself undertaking to acquaint the earl of Lincoln with the occurrence.

CHAPTER X.

THE hour of midnight at which Gesta and the witch had appointed to meet was now arrived. The moon shone as sweetly over Lincoln, as when Judith sat in her garden; and it was also frequently obscured by clouds, which were drifted on its path by the wind; these were torn at the edges, and scattered wildly in numerous fragments, over the clear heaven. Every instant produced a change above, that revetted the eye of contemplation, and filled it with tears; a change that moved the soul, and drew up its thoughts

from this base world, to higher regions; a change of surprising beauty!

But the city was still the scene of lawless violence: there was little of peace, holiness, or happiness, *there!* *Man* disturbed the quiet hours of sleeping nature—*man* troubled her repose! But for him the scene below—under the influence of moonlight and darkness combined—would have been as enchanting as that above.

In the centre of a marshy plain, stretching a number of miles, rose two lines of hills facing each other, the upper ridges sharply defined against the sky; and heath-land spreading backwards from them. The front of one hill was covered with woods; the front of the other bore the city of Lincoln. Between them there was a narrow valley, nearly filled by the river Witham. A bridge of eight arches was thrown over the current, at the foot of the city; and a suburb known by the name of Wykenford, extended from it, crossing the hollow to the opposite hill. Four stone walls, in a square, with four gates of imperishable construction, enclosed the upper part of the city, the lower wall running along the hill front, the upper wall at some distance above, on the level behind the summit, at the commencement of the heath-land, over which the wind swept howling, with scarce a tree or shrub to break its force. The four city gates faced each other, on the north, south, east, and west, according to the method of architecture used by the Romans, who had built these walls to enclose a military colony of their own, which they had planted here soon after their invasion of England, calling it Lindum Colonia. When they left the land, the Saxons built here, within this enclosure, their rude idol-temples—the latter giving place to small churches, after the introduction of the gospel by Birinus, the apostle of these parts. During the struggles that took place between the Danes and Saxons, the city walls and gates were injured, the buildings destroyed by fire, and the in-

habitants by the sword. William the conqueror repaired part of the damages Lincoln had sustained, and built that fortress called the castle, within the square space on the western extremity of the top of the hill. Within the city walls were three square enclosures—the castle, the minster-green, and the palace—besides lesser enclosures, formed by churches, monasteries, and the town prison.

A little beyond the lower angle of the western city wall, on the hill, was a district unlike the rest of Lincoln. From every part of the city within the walls, the noise of rude revelry, or strife, arose in discordancy; but *here*, a solitude gloomy by contrast, prevailed. The houses were different from those of any other part of the town—you neither found Roman, Saxon, or Gothic architecture; there were no feudal defences; not a church was to be seen in the detested neighbourhood; no banner floated on the breeze from battlemented wall; no soldier or monk loitered about—yet the dark walls, the space of ground which some of the buildings occupied, the one long street running up the hill, the square courts, and the latticed windows, contradicted the supposition that hinds dwelt here; for these habitations were not cottages. This was the quarter inhabited by the Jews, (called the Jews quarter,) which every good catholic avoided most sedulously.

It was from here that Gesta, the Jew's supposed nephew, moved abstractedly, as the chimes of the monasteries rang for midnight prayers. When he had gone a little way, he looked upon the prospect before him. His face was toward the opposite hill, whose front, shaped like an amphitheatre, and enclosing his twin-fellow, was dark, except where winding streams, of riband breadth, appeared under the shining moon; and where the tops of the wood opened, as the wind careered over them; and where trees fringed the semicircular outline, resting their forms in minuteness—beautiful in miniature, distinct in symmetry,

like tracery-work, half hid by leaves, in negligent abundance—against the sky. In the hollow below the suburb slept quietly, undisturbed only by trumpet-note, or bell, within its own far-extending walls, that shut it in, except where the marshes formed for it a still more natural defence. In this part were dwellings of several of the nobles of England. The mansion that had belonged to Lord Hugh de Gant, of Lancaster, was there; Gesta well knew the parapets that crowned it.

'Misery upon misery!' cried he. 'It was not enough that Leoni should distract me with his attentions to Judith, but this Nazarene must come too! Myrza shall put me off no longer;—I am resolved to know my fate, if she can tell it me, though I perish!'

He did not go to the tower in which Myrza resided, but turned to the residence of Leoni, a jeweller of Jewish principles and happy temperament, whom he had been intimate with, and by whom he was affectionately regarded. Leoni had been out, and was returning, when Gesta stepped up to the door of his house. 'Gesta!' he exclaimed, 'it is months since I exchanged a word with you. Come into my room; it is late—but you know we have seen the night out together, before now, and never thought of shutting our eyes in sleep.' As he spoke he offered his hand, which Gesta avoided. 'I have certain things to speak of, Leoni,' said he, 'before our hands meet in friendship again. I shall not keep you from your pallet more than a few minutes.' 'You may keep me from it all night, if you like,' said Leoni. 'I am so glad to see you again—I forgive your slights; and if you will not take my hand, why—you will not. Come.'

Having opened the door, he entered, and Gesta followed. 'You know my mother is old,' said Leoni; 'she goes to rest as soon as the curfew bell rings. The fires are raked up on the hearths; and I know not whether there is a light in the house. But you can follow me to my room, and we can converse by the light of the stars.'

The window in Leoni's chamber was opened by its owner, and the breeze blew in ; a pallet bed, a plain table, and two stools, were seen amid the gloom, and these comprised all the furniture of the apartment.

'We have spent some pleasant hours by this window, during by-gone summer nights, Gesta,' said Leoni. 'Sit down, and tell me why you have estranged yourself from me.—Why, what a miserable hanging look thou hast got hold of!' he continued, as Gesta threw himself on one of the stools by the window. 'Shrive me for a monk! but thou hast the askance vision of a malefactor! We will have wine to cheer thy heart! and then I will hear the story of thy griefs. I have some prime muscadine, of the finest quality.'

'Leoni,' said Gesta, 'I will not drink with you. You have wronged me. I came not here to-night in love. You see my state of mind—and I know your jesting qualities—to-morrow it will be a topic for mirth. He who is capable of falsehood and treachery is capable of ridiculing the consequences.'

'Falsehood and treachery!' repeated Leoni. 'Am I false and treacherous?'

'You are,' answered Gesta; 'as false as falsehood can make you—and treacherous too: for have you not robbed me of my exclusive love to Judith? Answer that?'

'You astonish me,' said Leoni. 'I never understood from you that you had an attachment for her. You never made to me the smallest disclosure.'

'An evasion worthy of you!' exclaimed Gesta—'you *knew* I loved her!'

'In my own mind I imagined so,' said Leoni; 'but I had no certainty of it.'

'Enough!' cried Gesta. 'Do you not remember, three years ago, in this room, we conversed upon this subject; and did I not ask you then, if you made any pretensions to the favour of my cousin? You said No; and I relied upon your word. Yet now I hear reports of your seeking

the countenance of Jocenus for your suit to his daughter—a suit, which, whoever makes—though he was my twin brother—is my deadly enemy. My uncle, I have heard, encourages you; and this is my errand here. As you are a man, Leoni, tell me the truth—how stand you in that quarter?'

'The merchant does encourage me, but I have made no disclosure to Judith,' said Leoni. 'As yet, my fortunes are kept back by him on whom they depend; but, at the death of my mother's brother, I can provide a home, and a provision for Judith, such as she has been accustomed to have: *then* I shall offer my hand to her. If she refuse me, I shall return to my simple way of life here, where I was born, and have ever since resided—and think no more of woman.'

'And if you are accepted, think you I shall look tamely on?' said Gesta.

'You cannot think *me* so tame in my love, as to give up her, while I have a chance of winning her,' returned Leoni; 'nor so lukewarm in my friendship, that I can lose you without pain! But tell me that Judith prefers you to me—and I promise to withdraw my claim; and happy may you be. I will wish you so with all my heart. Prythee be reasonable, Gesta.'

Leoni's character leaned as much to vanity, and sanguineness as Gesta's to distrust, and melancholy. The words Leoni had last spoken, acted as daggers to the heart of his listener; accompanied as they had been by an air of triumph.

'You agonise me!' cried Gesta. 'You scoff me! You know my ignoble condition! You see my person; is there a chance for me against thyself?—but reply to your own heart only. Whisper not the answer above thy breath, Leoni! rival! lest here, at this hour of night, I struggle with thee for life or death!'

'Why, if it come to a struggle *that* kind,' said Leoni, 'you would find yourself the worse man. I believe I have more strength of sinew than you.'

The cool utterance of these words, stung Gesta to madness; for his weakness was one of the things which troubled his self-love.

'If I stay, harm will happen,' said he. 'Good-night; to the latest moment of my life—I shall esteem you as you *deserve*—and so I leave you to your repose.'

'Passion clouds your reason, my friend,' said Leoni. 'Give me your hand, and have done with this jealous rage.'

'Never!' exclaimed Gesta; 'but,' he added, 'I will tell you how to decide this matter. Come with me, this midnight, to the Witch of the Water-side, and let her, by divination, inform us of our destinies.'

'What will be the good of that?'

'My mind will be at rest,' said Gesta, 'as far as you are concerned.'

'If going with you will set it at rest—if it will allay your jealousy—I am at your command. You shall lead me anywhere. But say she predicts in my favour, will you not then suffer more, and be more violent against me, than at present?'

'Leoni!' said Gesta; 'my state of suspense is not to be borne. *Any* certainty would be better than this. Will you come at once?'

'As you like,' said Leoni. 'Your uncle and I have often indulged a laugh at these sorcerers, whose pretensions all the world believe to be genuine: but I am not so perfectly satisfied, as Jocenus, of their ignorance of the knowledge to which they pretend. You remember the Scripture account of King Saul's night visit to the witch of Endor, Gesta? I am glad it has occurred to my recollection,' he added. 'It puts me in the right mood. I shall rely with faith on all she tells me; and shall neither dare to laugh or cry, hope or fear, but in accordance with the prescribed doom.'

'I do not believe in one half that is said of her power,' said Gesta; 'but I believe that the other half is true. Indeed, to doubt it, is to deny evidence the most complete. Are you ready?'

'I am,' replied Leoni.

As they were about to leave the

house, the old woman was heard calling, 'Leoni, my son!' and the mother hobbled down stairs as fast as her asthma would permit. 'Where are you going in the night air, my son?—you will take cold,' said the Jewess. 'Not I, mother,' said Leoni. 'Go back to your bed, and do not disturb yourself on my account.' 'I cannot sleep while you are out of the house; only feel how the night dews are falling,' said she. 'Who is here with you, my son?' she inquired. Leoni made no answer, for he was aware that Gesta was no favourite with his mother. 'O, it is Gesta, I see,' she added; 'and why comes he here to break my son's rest, and take him from his home at this time of night? Leoni, return to your chamber. And I beg that you, sir, will leave; and if you wish to speak with Leoni, I hope in future you will take advantage of the morning, for night consultations I do not approve of. I am persuaded your uncle is ignorant of such hours, but I will acquaint him of them.'

'Madam,' said Gesta, 'your son is at his own disposal.'

'Tush—Tush!' said Leoni, 'my mother is too tender of me; she imagines I am a boy still.'

It was not without a little affectionate authority that Leoni induced his parent to return, and to leave him to act as he pleased. While he was debating with her, the cheek of Gesta burnt with vexation: for many remarks which she made were anything but flattering to him. This incident only delayed Leoni and himself a few minutes. They were soon on the bridge at the foot of the hill, which they crossed; Gesta becoming lost in thought, and Leoni humming a lively air.

On the middle of the bridge was a tomb-like building, where a light burnt constantly, and in which two monks prayed at certain hours. Under its carved cornice, stood a figure in shade, attired in monkish weeds, with the light falling on its face, which was turned towards Leoni and Gesta, as they passed by. Gesta grasped the arm of his companion tightly; and Leoni perceived

he was alarmed. 'Who—who stands there so motionless?' said the terrified man, as he pointed out the figure to Leoni. 'See—see—it is gone!'

'Gone!' exclaimed Leoni; 'to be sure it has gone—into the door to pray for some rich man's soul in purgatory. What did you think it was?'

'Nothing.—I am ashamed of such fears,' said Gesta, walking on.

'Nay,' said Leoni, 'what likeness did it assume to your fancy?'

'None—none, Leoni,' answered Gesta. 'Yet I will not tell an untruth, for it appeared to me then, Leoni, like the confessor.'

'The confessor! what confessor?'

'He,' rejoined Gesta, 'in whose charge Lady Helen de Gant, of Lancaster, left young Sir Hugh, and her gold.'

'Hum—' ejaculated Leoni—'I have heard strange rumours concerning the manner of the confessor's death. You seemed to know something about it. Am I right?'

Gesta answered not. He was oppressed by a load of miserable thoughts.

Leoni and Gesta entered a boat that lay on the water. 'Row us half a mile down the river—I think there will be moonlight sufficient,' said Gesta, speaking to the boatman. Philip, as he was named, took his oars in hand, and replied, 'Yes, sirs, there will be light enough while the moon is out, to row us that distance; but if we went further we should stand a chance of running against some of the crafts in the river. There's a storm above, masters. I had rather face it out in this river, sirs, than at sea. It's a hard calling that of a seaman; landmen little think what they go through.'

He pulled briskly. Gesta looking over the side of the boat. The violence of his jealousy had abated, and he began to entertain a doubt of the reasonableness of his behaviour to Leoni. His angry passions arose in a tumult, but his heart melted toward Leoni, who had been his associate for some years, had

shown him the most delicate sympathy for his misfortunes, and had also loved him, that he had forgiven all his revengeful violence of temper, and now only sought to soothe him. His first impulse was to fling the hand of Leoni back with hate; but a moment passed—and still another—and he *could* not. Yet to return the pressure, was as impossible as to be insensible to it. Unfortunately, Leoni mistook the passiveness of Gesta, for implacable coldness; he withdrew his hand, and was now seriously offended. To disguise his feelings, he encouraged the boatman to talk.

'Yes, master,' said Philip, 'poor Ralph, who had this boat before me, died two days ago at my cottage, over the marsh yonder, to the right; he lies there now, poor fellow! I am a lone man, as he was; and we were like brothers. After I left sea, I worked in the fens, and kept as fine a little warren of silver-grey, and clear-white rabbits, as ever grew fur. I assure you they were prized.'

'I dare say they were,' said Leoni.

'Yes, sir, they were,' continued Philip; 'and you know there is not another county to be named with Lincolnshire for fine rabbits. My silver-grey furs fetched a good price, master. But the white ones were better still. I have had as much as—'

'Why did you give up so profitable a trade?' interrupted Leoni.

'Why you see sir,' said Philip, 'poor Ralph was fond of his cockle-shell of a boat. He would take some pains painting and cleaning her: he christened her Alice, the name of a fenman's daughter, who lived a little way off from us. I promised Ralph to see him buried in her grave; it was his dying wish. He was never himself after Alice died; and seemed to take to nothing but this bit of timber.'

'But the rabbits,' said Leoni.

'I sold them, and made some silver pennies by them. I did not like to let them go; but Ralph gave me his boat when he was taken ill, and I promised to ply it for him. And here I am, in all weathers, sir; I like

this trade best, for what a man is bred to comes more natural to him than any thing else ; and I cannot deny but the rabbits were troublesome to me, for I found that I knew better how to pull a cable-rope than to manage such little animals.'

Leoni made some trivial remarks, and the boatman was about to speak again, when he slackened his oars, and, as if some memory dawned on his mind, looked at Gesta, who averted his face. There was a silence, relieved by the exclamation of Gesta, who perceived Myrza's tower, standing on the right bank ; 'Stop,' he cried ; 'we shall go no further than here ; run the boat to the side.' This being done Leoni sprang out. Instantly the boatman said to Gesta, 'Master Jew, have you forgotten what happened some four or five years ago, between you and the confessor ?'

'Hush—for your life !' said Gesta. 'Only tell me this—did he die ! I have longed to have more certainty of that.'

'I told you, master Jew, that he did.' But, as Philip spoke he faltered ; and Gesta perceiving this, grasped his collar, and said, 'I doubt the truth of your assertion !' 'Softly, master ; you are so rough,' said the boatman. 'Well—I am not alone now,' said Gesta ; 'but I shall see you again ; and by all the fathers, I will then wring the truth from you—for it concerns me nearly !' 'Master Jew, I will tell you all I know,' said Philip, 'and that is not much. If you do not choose to believe me, 'tis no fault of mine ; I never told you a lie about that priest, because I thought what I said was true.' 'You thought !' echoed Gesta. But Philip was rowing into the middle of the river, where he cried out, whilst he pointed to the east, 'I shall float her back for you before light breaks yonder !'

The door of the tower was opened by Myrza herself, who held an odd taper in one of her bony hands, and shaded its flame with the other. Her wasted figure was divested of the scarlet mantle, but was still enveloped in the tight pelisse and un-

der gown. Her red hair, in a tangled mass, was confined by a serpent skin, which was bound around her temples. Her breast was sunken, so that she stooped much. The pallor of her strange features, was ghastly ; and her eyes blazed forth from their red sockets, with surprising lustre.

'My successor !' she exclaimed, 'welcome ! You are late—but there is still time for that which we have to perform. Fool !' she muttered to Gesta, as Leoni came forwards. 'Fool ! Why have you brought him here ? No eye of living man but yours, may see my secret rites. Madman ! you have roused my anger !' Stamping her foot, she looked as one possessed, until Gesta softened her ire by an explanation.

CHAPTER XI.

LEONI and Gesta followed Myrza up to the top of the building. When they had gone to some height, the witch bade them stop in the dark, while she entered a door in the stairs wall. Some minutes passed, and she did not return ; but a strange light threw its reflection on that part of the wall which they could see. They then heard Myrza walking backwards and forwards with measured steps.

'She must have forgotten that we are here,' said Leoni. But scarcely had the words passed his lips, when the light flashed more vividly, and expired. 'Enter !' cried the witch from within. They obeyed her, and found themselves in a drear apartment, illumined by the taper before named.

'What do you seek to know ?' asked Myrza, speaking to Leoni. He referred her to Gesta, who repeated what he had before told her. 'The fate of the Jew's daughter !' cried the witch : 'yes—that is what you seek to know. But have you the courage to look on and listen *silently*, while I inquire for you within the magic circle ? Silently, I say, for if either of you make the least noise, your destruction and mine might follow.'

'I am not so anxious for a reply,

as to purchase it at a risk so great,' said Leoni. 'I desire to live in and by my honest occupation; and esteem it a blessing not to have my mind disturbed from it. Gesta has brought me hither for his satisfaction—not mine; for I do not consider these scenes calculated to compose one's spirits; and at this period of the sun's absence, you are aware, one needs them to be composed, rather than *raised*.'

'You could jest in a sepulchre, Leoni, if you can jest here!' said Gesta. 'But attend; at the opposite end of this room, is a smaller apartment, in which usually burns a lamp and a fire, you can wait there, I will receive the answer, and summon you as soon as I have it.'

'That arrangement will suit me well,' said Leoni. 'And, if you would oblige me,' said he softly, 'entreat your acquaintance there, to be as brief as possible.'

The wood fire and lamp were burning in the closet which Leoni entered, and he sat down near the straw pallet on which Myrza took her slumbers, calling about him a variety of humorous associations, to repel the advance of any more unpleasant fancies, by which he was assailed in spite of himself. After giving the flaming wood a rousing stir, he threw off his cloak, and, placing himself in an attitude of graceful ease, suffered his chin to drop on his breast.

Myrza being alone with Gesta, expressed satisfaction at the absence of Leoni from the scene in which she wished to enact her mysteries. She took her wand into her hand, and after pointing it to the east three times, and bowing herself to the ground, drew from a recess a number of living snakes, which she placed without the edge of the circle that she had drawn around her. She waved her branch of mistletoe, and stretching out her wand to the east, bowed herself thrice, chaunting a monotonous measure, the import of which was to remind certain unseen beings of her past necromantic adventures. After every bend of her body she sprinkled the juice

of the mistletoe around the circle, where the snakes lay stretched out motionless, as if charmed into stone, shallow earthen pots, containing a burning composition, were placed within the circle. This fire was ordinarily kept in vessels without openings, and would burn under water. The livid flame emitted a stench that could not be borne for any length of time without producing serious effects: it might be this which stupified the snakes, and caused them to lay torpid during Myrza's incantations; nor the snakes alone, but toads and other reptiles, which were collected around the circle; and by their moveless appearance, assisted the first effect of these ceremonies upon the beholder. The same fire would consume even flint and iron, and was not to be extinguished by ordinary means, however violently used. How it was kept in the vessels, without destroying them, is a mystery that has not yet been solved. However, from each pan the flame arose in curious forms; sometimes in the corkscrew fashion, changing to pyramidal sheets, tapering off to a fine point, from which the smoke ascended to the top of the room, and at other times appearing as domes, hollowed within; and thus it continued to vary remarkably, while Myrza, scattered on the fire-pots a mixture from a phial, chaunting thus:—

Dew from the nightshade I have wrung,
And venom from the serpent's tongue,
(Won by a watery moonbeam's light
Where wondrous shapes in deep of
night,
Watched the shrubs that work men-
spite.

Shapes that foul and fair were seen,
On the spectre-blasted green);
This dew and venom I pour to-night,
With juice of hemlock, and aconite,
Henbane, and poppy, and mistletoe,
On the magic flame below,

Thus—and thus—and thus.
Here followed an invocation to certain spirits. To Gesta it appeared that the spectral fires of the circle, were acted on by her spells for they flushed up to a considerable height as she uttered, with contortions of the body, and with symptoms of

agony, the dread names, and then relapsed into a sickly glimmer. The transition was too much for Gesta; the thick darkness around him seemed filled with demons; Myrza was horrible; and the unwholesome flames which filled the room were sickening to his sense. He retreated to the closet in which Leoni was, being covered with perspiration. Again the light increased in strength, and he was animated with a resolution to see and hear the whole. No incredulity corrected the awe with which he listened; his manhood yielded to the illusion that was presented before him; and thus he was prepared for what should follow. Myrza chaunted on, while she knelt down, lines which had no reference to Gesta's inquiry, concerning the success of Leoni and himself with Judith, but to which he listened thirstingly, with a fearful interest awakening in his breast, of the kind which Myrza desired to see in him; while it was evident to himself that it was principally for him she was giving measured utterance to rhymes such as these:—

Above the mighty wizard's cave,
(Which is now his spacious grave.)
Oak trees, thousand years and more
Have misletoe and acorns bore:
In the ancient branches dwell,
Many a fiend of potent spell:
Who controls the glaring wolf, and
binds [kinds;
The red-tongued serpents venom'd
Who lash the waves, and the whirl-
winds dire,
And compels the clouds to spit their
fire; [light
Who know the snakes-eyes lamps that
The gloomy shades of nether night;
And follow the ghosts dismissed from
clay,
To realms that never smile with day.
The evil spirit, LOKE, they know,
Mark—mark! how the flame
burns pale and blue;
His wife—'I'll messenger—**ANGERBODE**,
Hath at their bidding, flown or rode,
To mission for deeds of blood and crime,
Her children three in their greedy prime
Wolf **FENRIS**, and **MIDGARD**, the ser-
pent vast,
And **HELA**, the witch of death, who has
past
Just now the tower where Myrza dwells,
And worketh harm with their awful
spells.

In the deep hollow where grey oaks
grow, [shrubs below:
And the serpent twined round the
Where pale forms stood as white as the
moon,
And chaunted the Runic rhyme,
I called on fiends with the storm-blast's
tune,

At the thickest starlight time,
Magic harps in and out were sounding,
Fairy footsteps light were bounding
Over the velvet hollow; [beaming,
Dim shadows, and fitful lamps were
Many a serpent's eye was gl-aming,
Me did blue-fleshed **HELA** follow—

Mark—mark, how the flame
burns blue and dim.

She stopped before she had concluded, pointing to the flames which were expiring. Gesta's eyes were fixed upon them; each flame flickered—trembled—sank to the lowest point—and so remained. Gesta could no longer see Myrza; but he understood by his ear that she had started up, and that she was holding converse with some being or beings, whom to her belief was present amid the gloom; nay, his imagination shaped out before him a colossal figure made apparent by denser darkness close to the circle. Once more he retreated backwards slowly, and said, 'Now—now am I satisfied that mortals may have intercourse with spirits! That dread form before me, comes to Myrza's bidding, with such promptness, that I half wish I were herself, and could command it. Yet, let me fall back from its influence! how know I whether it be evil or good?—If the flame would but shoot up a little that I might see it! I have a dreadful curiosity to know more of it!—I feel no more mean clay; but all my immortality stirs within me and asks communion with its bodiless fellows. Often has Myrza spoken of sympathies—and I have listened dull and deaf—but now I feel what she would have taught me. My spirit loathes the beings of earth, and is drawn by occult sympathies to those unseen! The magic of the universe—grand idea! Amazing thought! Element melts with element—each seeking its like through an infinite variety of compounds! My soul has no space in this body; prisoned from light and air with-

out companions, but prisoners like itself. Poor, grovelling man ! without an acquaintance with occult sublimities—what is he !'

Some such thoughts visited his mind, until Myrza chaunted the answer which he sought for himself and Leoni. Gesta advanced, and heard it in these words :—

No Jew shall ever win the maiden's heart,
Nor of her father's fortune bear a part :
Who seeks her love, shall seek her love
In vain :

His sole reward—danger, and grief, and pain.

Every word was imprinted on Gesta's memory as the witch spoke. Perhaps his first emotion was joy that Leoni was doomed to be unsuccessful ; but was he not himself a Jew ? and did not the sentence against his friend condemn him also ? Still, the load of jealous anxiety, which had been so insufferable to him, was gone. Leoni would never be the husband of Judith ? and could better bear his own doom. Such is the selfishness of passion ; such were the narrow feelings that overclouded for a time, Gesta's sense.

Myrza's mystical invocations, were chorused by the noise of the reviving reptiles, the hissing of the snakes, and the squeaking of bats, as the smoke reached their hiding-places ; the ravens croaked, owls screeched, as though they had been a band of suffering spirits. The hair of Gesta stiffened as he harkened to this chorus of swelling noises. They all had a most unearthly harmony, and suited Myrza's performance so well, that he must have been more than man who could have avoided yielding to their united potency.

But the earthen pots began to cast forth more of their sinister light, and that little was welcome to Gesta, for his endurance was stretched to the utmost. Myrza was seen indistinctly ; her countenance distorted and convulsed ; with her wand she appeared keeping off incorporeal assailants. The fires increased, while the wind rolled their vapours round the circle ; most of the loathsome creatures there, became mute and stirless ; and pre-

sently Myrza's rhymes expressed mysteriously that some misfortune, from the hands of high-born nobles, was about to light on the Jewess heiress herself. So Gesta understood ; and his heart sank like lead, while his ear dwelt on the concluding words of her prophesy :—

The mildew'd damp
Of the dungeon, where is nor taper nor lamp ;

Crannies of black, untapestried walls,
Where the cold slug for ever crawls,
Horned snails on the slimy roof.
Sharp-teethed rats in dens—man-proof,
These about her will be, by night and by day.

While her heart's-hope pines, and wastes away,
And her blood grows thin, and her bones decay.

Horror swallowed up every other feeling of Gesta's. To hear the woman whom he had so passionately loved, fated to be a prisoner in some dungeon, and to die there—for this was the interpretation he gave to the lines—was misery ! and he only found relief by the admission of a little of his unbelief of the witch's supernatural powers into his mind.

'And what heart's-hope was that,' thought Gesta, 'which shall *pine and waste away* ! Can Judith love ? This fearful woman must mean so — and as I read the riddle, my cousin is to be, like Leoni and myself, unfortunate in her love. Lord Hugh—he is the man, as surely as ever I donned a gaberdine ! I have suspected it. Judith was so chary of speaking of him ; and if he were named before her, O she would appear so much engaged with other thoughts, and presently retire. O aye ;—a thousand proofs arise before me. Her illness when the knight married Lady Helen, of which my uncle told me ; let me see—at that time I was at Boston, taking in a cargo of silks and perfumes—I can recall the period well—and I can understand that she was suffering some such pangs—as I suffer now.' Such speculations of the youth, were broken by the fall of Myrza upon the floor, across the breadth of the circle ; the witch had been overcome by the ill vapours that issued from the fires, which diffused

around a flaring light. 'Leave me! Go to your companion! Tarry not here, O youth—tarry not!' exclaimed Myrza, waving Gesta back with a motion of her hand, as he sprang forwards a few steps to her assistance. 'Away!—Haste!—Go—as you dread an evil death!' she cried. Instantly after she swooned.

'I obey you,' replied Gesta, catching the alarm which her looks had communicated; and he turned to the farther wall, and burst open the door of the closet with haste. At first he could not perceive Leoni; and he called on his name without receiving an answer. Gesta listened, and heard him breathing loudly, as if asleep; looking around, he saw him stretched in repose on the pallet of the witch. He bent over the figure. Here was a contrast! His eyes, to his thought, would never close peacefully again, but in the grave. 'No glittering couch—no soft-dying airs—no wines medicated with Arabian drugs—nor any other arts that invite to sleep the worn—though of the subtlest invention,' said Gesta, 'would be of any avail for me! Yet he—sleeps *here*, at so awful a time—sleeps *thus*! Things of darkness raised out of their spheres close by! The doom of the best-loved being pronounced from a sybil's lips! Himself decreed to lose his hopes of her for ever! Yet—yet he sleeps! Happy Leoni!'

As Gesta shook the Hebrew by the shoulder, Leoni stared around, incredulous of his present position; and, having recalled the incidents of the night by an operation of the faculties of his memory, started to his feet, and exclaimed—

'How! What, is it all over?'

'You have a fine propensity for sleeping,' said Gesta.

'Aye, faith! as I am an honest jeweller, it seems so,' said Leoni, 'aye, faith—it is true! I don't know how it was, but the fire made me drowsy, after coming out of the air. How I got upon that pallet of the hags I know not; but I judge I slipped down on it. I remember drawing the chair back as the heat of the fire increased. By the honour of

my nation, I had rather I had had a different bed!—yet I have slept, soundly, too.'

'Have you heard no noise?' asked Gesta.

'No, I have heard none; I never to my knowledge passed a quieter hour.'

'And you have seen nothing?'

'No—nothing. What of the witch?'

'Softly;—not a word,' said Gesta. 'Draw on your cloak and follow me; I know there are private stairs running from this closet door to a postern entrance of the tower, facing the marsh; if I can find them we will be gone.' Saying this, he raised the lamp and examined the walls. A door was soon discovered. 'Tread cautiously,' said Gesta, holding the light close to the edge of the stairs as he passed down, stopping to look below.

Leoni carried something beneath his cloak.

'What have you there?' asked Gesta. 'You brought nothing from your own house.'

'I brought nothing from it,' said Leoni, 'and I shall add nothing to it by what I carry back; yet I have something here of weight and size—and it concerns you.'

'Concerns me!' said Gesta, 'nay, you speak what I cannot understand. You brought nothing from your house—you have taken that which you carry from the places we are quitting; and there is nothing there that concerns me.'

The sleep which Leoni had enjoyed had obliterated the remembrance of the offence he had received from Gesta; but now it returned to his recollection. He was cold in his manners as he said, 'The box I carry I found in the closet above, with a piece of parchment nailed on the top bearing an inscription purporting that the contents were for you; and were entrusted to the care of Myrza as she was to be made acquainted with them by you.'

'Ha! a box say you, Leoni!'

'A box or case, whichever you please to call it,' answered Leoni. 'Here it is,' said Leoni, handing to

Gesta the article in question; 'it is your property, or your name would not have been so set forth on the top thereof. Some monk traced the characters, for they seem worded by a Christian, and we know no peasant, and but few of the peasant's masters, can either read or write. The wind is likely to prove the boatman a true prophet. By our law, Gesta, it blows keenly!'

'It does indeed,' said Gesta. 'Stand here until the rough swell of the wind has abated.' The blast came on furiously over the marsh.

'Now while the lull lasts, let us on the river,' cried Leoni. It was done; and the boatman rowed them towards the city.

'It is colder than it was in the early part of the night, masters,' said Philip. 'The winter is loath to part from us.

Neither Leoni nor Gesta made any answer. The boatman continued:— 'There were rough doings in our merry Lincoln last evening. Several houses were broken open, the wares taken out of the stores and carried off by the Earl of Lincoln's men—and Richard of Bargate's wife, the hostelrie-keeper, is missing. Richard will make those who took her repent that job; he's no milksop; he can thrash a soldier, as well as brew good ale; and if the earl won't right him, he says he'll right himself;—and that's a spirit I like to see, sirs. I often take a can of ale with Richard; I sold many of my best rabbits to him some time back; poor Ralph used to go there.'

'I know Richard well,' said Leoni, 'and he is no coward, as you say. If so gross an injury has been done him, no man will more obstinately revenge himself—I had rather be his friend than his foe, whatever were my rank.'

'As to rank,' said Philip, 'the prince would not be safe if he had stolen Marjoram from the hostelrie. Every one knows that who knows Richard; there will be a stir on the day that's coming. A court of justice is to be held at the palace, they say; and if Richard of Bargate

doesn't make a complaint there, I'm no sailor.'

'And suppose this complaint is of no service? for you know the earl will screen his followers from punishment,' said Leoni.

'Then, master,' said Philip, 'worse will come of it, that's all. I wouldn't be that same earl, if he denies justice to Richard, not for the worth of all his lands! Why, bless you, the hostelrie-keeper would hunt the earl to the world's end—that's Richard's temper. The wind has rested well—but hark, sir, it comes on again blustering louder than ever. Be steady, my little boat! we shall have her at home now, sir, in a minute.' They were nearly upset under this squall, but through Philip's management escaped the accident.

A little while after, as Gesta and Leoni were pursuing their way up the Strait, after their visit to the Witch of the Waterside, Philip walked up and down upon the bank to which his boat was fastened, near the bridge, endeavouring to excite warmth in his frame. After having succeeded, he was in doubt whether he should return to his cottage or not. 'Daylight is voyaging this way, fast, now,' said he, 'and the sun will soon be up over the marshes yonder. It is scarce worth while to go home before to-morrow evening. I had rather be in Ralph's boat than in that lonely land cabin. There will be no rain yet, and I heed the wind no more here than a lullaby.'

As he was whistling a rough sea-stave, he heard the crowing of a cock in one of the courts belonging to the houses by the river-side, and, farther off, the shout of boys preparing to drive cattle to the moors and meadows, gave farther evidence of the near approach of morning. Gesta, having parted with Leoni at the door of his house, returned to inquire further from Philip concerning the supposed death of the confessor.

CHAPTER XII.

SITUATED nearer the town than Myrza's tower, but by the water-side, stood the Monks' House, a

priory of black friars, which, with its surrounding lands was named Icanno, and over which Prior Taylor presided. The superior himself, on the day succeeding that of the banquet held in the episcopal palace, was shut up within the cell in the priory which he called his own. The narrow casement of the chapel shook with each gust of wind, under its gloomy stone arch. The winter was giving 'a longing, lingering look behind,' to that half of the world which it was on the eve of quitting. The prior shivered with cold as he sat at a table conversing with Lord Hugh, and gathered about his shoulders a black upper garment arranged over his cassock.

'You see my hearth looks inhospitable, my lord,' said he; 'we will have a hot brand or two upon it.' He opened the door, and spoke to a menial of the priory, whose office it was to perform inferior services for the brethren. These conversi wore the monkish garb. Obedient to his superior's command, Andrew, for such was the servitor's name, kindled a fire in the cell, and placed on the table some cakes, of a wholesome sort made of barley and wheat, grown in the fields belonging to the house, and baked in the kitchen of the monastery, by the skilful kitchenier. Beside the cakes, were placed some of the cellarer's best mead.

'Drink, my lord,' said the prior, 'poor as are the accommodations which we can offer you, they are not to be despised in one respect, they are offered in a religious spirit of love and honour; such as you are entitled to from us, having been formerly a benefactor of this house of ours, when the saints had blessed you with good fortune, under our Lady's sanction.'

Lord Hugh thanked the prior, and drank; remarking the sadness of the superior's countenance, and his sighs. The prior replied that he would reveal the cause, and urged the crusader to partake of that which was set before him. Cold ox-chine, and boar-ham, were the dishes brought by Andrew, and to

these, the crusader, thus invited, did not fail to do ample justice. An ewer containing water was handed when the repast was over, in which the prior and Lord Hugh dipped their hands, drying them with linen cloths. The mead was left with some sweet cakes on the table, when Andrew withdrew with the other refreshments. The seats were pulled nearer to the hearth, the bolt of the cell door was drawn, and both the crusader and the prior yielded to a thoughtfulness, which had been kept at a distance, although proceeding from opposite causes. After there had been a pause of silence, the knight raised his head; and, looking to the door, said, 'Prior, my little Hugh is in your gallery without; I pray you, if it be he, admit him. I have something to question you about when he is present; and have seen him but once since I came from Palestine—and he is all in the world that is now left to me.'

'Little Sir Hugh is not in the gallery,' said the prior, with extraordinary gravity: then he added, 'he is—not far off: you shall see him presently.'

'I am glad of that, prior—though I must say your manner frightens me,' cried the crusader. 'I would know if my little knight hath borne himself as you could wish—or, if he hath oft won chastisement, by his love of trap-ball?'

The prior was at a loss how to answer wisely; 'My lord,' he said, 'I scarce know what to say. I have mournful tidings to impart to you. To reply to *this* question now, would be to trifle away moments that should be spent in bringing evidences against your wrongers. O my lord, that which has happened I fear to tell! It is too unspeakably sorrowful!'

'Said you not I should see my Hugh presently?' cried the knight.

'Said you not that he was near?'

'Even so,' rejoined the prior. 'My dear lord! His earthly part is near to you; but his soul has flown to heaven. You shall behold with your own eyes, a sight which brings the tears from mine.' The prior led the

knight into the next cell, where, on a mattress, lay the cold form of the lovely child. His little coat, and his fair hair, were drenched with wet, that dripped upon the floor. His feet had been stripped of their sandals, and were perfectly white, as if they had been newly sculptured in alabaster; but, round the middle of both feet and hands, were bound strips of linen.

'My boy!—my beautiful Hugh!' exclaimed the miserable knight, snatching the corpse to his arms. 'Heaven and earth!' he exclaimed, after a scrutiny of the innocent features, sitting down on the mattress, you do not mean to tell me, prior, that he has gone for ever?

'He is a blessed saint and martyr in heaven,' said the prior.

'Then,' said the knight, 'let me tell you, prior, that it would have been far better if his mother had taken him with her to her tomb, rather than have left him in treacherous hands to perish in this manner!'

The prior's eye was bent on the bereaved crusader, and some concealed emotions moved his heart, as he heard the words Lord Hugh last spoke, and met his accusing glance.

'My lord,' said he, 'you speak under the influence of surprise and grief—I forgive you your offensive meaning.'

'I speak what I will prove! you, prior, have been the indirect means of my son's death!' exclaimed the knight.

'How so, my lord?' asked the prior.

'Thus—then,' replied Lord Hugh, 'my child told me, but yesterday, that you had made him unhappy by denying him a sufficiency of food, and by shutting him up to do penance, for hours at one time, by night and day; that you were unkind to him; which I can well believe, in despite of your assumed courtesy to myself!'

'How does this agree, my lord,' said the prior. 'With the facts that Sir Hugh has played daily in the town streets, and has visited persons to whom he had become attached, and who took considerable

interest in his welfare? And why, if I have acted to your son so meanly as you say, did not those friends of his interfere with me, to procure for him better treatment? They never visited me on his behalf. If you have heard complaints from them, it would be no more than reasonable, if I demanded, that they should be brought face to face with me, and my brethren in this house should be witnesses to decide the question, my lord.'

'No—no,' said the knight, hearing a groan of pain, 'I should without doubt see the force of what you urge were my mind more at ease. Reverend prior, I will punish myself hereafter for having offended you. Heaven forefend that I should charge unjustly one of Holy Church. But such a sight as *this*, when I have but just arrived in Lincoln, and with other trials, is enough to send me beyond my discretion.'

'It is, my lord, I grant it,' said the prior, 'consider the offence forgotten. But if this dear little martyr could speak now,' he added, 'I am sure he would redeem me from your displeasure. My lord,' said he, 'I have laboured to acquit myself of that duty to him which I had imposed on myself. I had no obligation to burden myself and my brethren with the expense and responsibility which the care of this child drew with it. But when our good brother, your late lady's confessor, whom God assoilze! died, I vowed to our Lady, that I would never part with him but to yourself; and would preserve him for you with all the tenderness which his spiritual father had felt for him: a voluntary kindness, to which, I was farther stimulated by the remembrance of your benefactions to this house in former times. Sir Hugh's representations of my conduct to him, unfavourable as they were, do not surprise me, for he had offended me during the past year, by going to the Jew's quarter, and staying there a considerable time; a circumstance which is difficult to account for, as all his playfellows avoided that part carefully—as truly there were but

too many reasons for doing, which the melancholy death of our Sir Hugh shows, even if there had never been any other fatal instances of this sort, as proofs. I had often threatened Sir Hugh—and even punished him (but only as a tender father, my lord) with the view of drawing him from this practice; but in vain.'

Thus the prior talked on in his own vindication, and so plausible was all he urged, and so much affection he showed for the child, and so much respect for the knight, that persons sceptical of his probity would have been almost convinced, that *he* had not been to blame for the melancholy event which had so early withered the opening flower of a noble house.

'Enough, reverend prior,' said the knight, 'enough I ask your pardon. But you speak of expense; I pray you let me ask, did my lady leave none of her wealth for her child—and did none of it come to your hands? However, trouble not yourself to answer such questions at present—but tell me how, and by what means, my boy died?'

'I suspected,' said the prior, 'that Sir Hugh was in the Jews quarter last evening, as he did not return from his play; and as Monks Lane, which lead hither, is peculiarly dangerous, I determined to venture among those evil abodes which the Jews inhabit, to seek my truant. I watched him into the garden belonging to the merchant, Jocenus; and as we know his tribe to be full of foul designs toward the children of Holy Church, I entered also—privily—and remained secreted behind some trees, while I saw—what followed, I scarce dare reveal.—You cannot bear it.'

'Indeed I can scarcely bear it!' said the knight, 'but I pray you go on!—hide nothing from me!'

'My lord,' said the prior, 'I will—I must be frank with you! You were once suspected of an intimacy with this Jocenus—this cruel infidel: of an attachment to his daughter—a sorceress of the worst kind—inasmuch as she employs her

beauty and natural gifts to lure to her house Christians, and the children of Christians, in order to murder them! O, my lord, see here, and spare me a repetition of horrors, which should have no words!' As the prior spoke, he unbound the strips of linen from the hands and feet of the corpse, and showed the crusader, red, jagged holes, such as might have been bored with nails, quite through the tiny palms, and through the middle of the flat part of each foot.

'Calm yourself, my dear lord,' said the prior. 'By the sacred standard which your hands have uplifted so heroically on many a Moslem field—by the courage of your heart—I conjure you, my dear Lord De Gant, bear this blow with fortitude! At the same time be not apathetic; let grief man you—not unman you. I will point you to your lady's tomb, where your knightly troth lies injured—I will remind you of your crusadic vow, which enjoins you to war to the death for the Holy Sepulchre, against all infidels—I will address fealty to the church—your loyalty to the pontiff: and if there be any other tie which you acknowledge, by that I will urge you to stern vengeance! My lord, apathy would ill become you now—you must have vengeance for this detestable wrong!'

'Who has done it?' fiercely demanded the knight. 'Tell me not of patience—prior—vengeance is the word! To the winds with patience! Tell me who has done it, and I will hack the reptile into morsels with this weapon I wear, and send his soul to the penal fires he has deserved, ere he shall have time to roar for mercy! Tell me, I say—who has performed this barbarous tragedy on my son?'

The prior trembled before the burst of violence which he had aroused, but reassumed his subtle composure.

'As I stood in the Jew's garden, said the prior, 'I saw Jocenus, the merchant, lightning his nephew, a deformed youth, down a shaded

path to a well ; the nephew bore the body which is before you, and by the direction of the Jew, his uncle, threw it headlong into the well ; a third figure looked down upon it, and whispered to the accused pair whom it accompanied. My Lord Hugh, this figure was that of a woman—a beautiful one. Her Indian shawl fell back from her head, and her jet hair escaped over her bosom, pearls and rubies, rich and costly, confined this hair about her head ; her eyes were supernaturally brilliant, and they were black : her cheeks were crimsoned ; and an upper velvet robe was upon her perfect figure. I will not say the name of this woman—my lord, you know it.'

The knight was dreadfully excited. The person he described was Judith. He muttered, 'Holy Mother : that an angel in aspect should be a fiend in heart, is unaccountable ! What may we trust, if such beauty, such modesty, such simplicity, as hers deceive ? I cannot believe this, prior. She is a Jewess, I know, but I know that she is no sorceress—no murderess—no deceiver. I would assert it to his holiness of Rome himself, with my child's dead body before me, and all the saints to witness !'

'I say I saw her there !' said the prior, 'Were I capable of a deliberate lie, my lord, on such a subject, methinks you might discover it by a few inquiries within your own mind. How should I know her dress and her appearance, so accurately ? Have I had any love for any daughter of an outcast Israelite ? Has she admitted me familiarly to hear her lays with the harp ? Have I eaten and drank in her house ?'

'Spare me, prior,' said the knight. 'Spare me ; for all that you hint at I will satisfy the church, and you, by liberal grants of land and fees, when I receive my lady's wealth. But did you say it was Jocusus—he himself—who bade the deformed youth throw my abused boy into the well ?'

'It was he himself ;—and I heard

his daughter say that she had seen him *crucified*.'

The knight shrank back at the word ; then reflecting with sternness, gazed at the prior as if he would search his soul ; but the latter bore the gaze with steadiness ; albeit he was aware he had ventured too far.

'She said that she had *seen* him crucified ?' repeated the knight. '*She*—so tender-hearted a maiden ! so wise in her humaneness, that I have often felt my hand unnerved when it was about to strike a foe to the earth, merely by the remembrance of her speeches, which sounded as pious as any priest's. It is not to be credited. And I tell you, prior, that the eloquence of Jocusus against all bloodshed, cruelty, and violence, would exceed yours. I have heard him reason on the turpitude of war, on its dreadful results, on the desolation of happy homes which it causes,—and would he be guilty of a barbarous deed like this ? Besides, my child told me, himself, that Jocusus and his daughter were tender to him—that they loved him, and had won his heart by a thousand kindnesses—which were genuine no doubt.'

'Genuine sorcery !' interrupted the prior. 'Sorcery !—genuine sorcery ! Understand, my Lord Gant, that you stand in some danger of being attainted as a sharer in the vile practises of these Jews, since you so obstinately shut your eyes to their guilt, although it is asserted by a spiritual pastor—whose word you are bound to reverence.'

The knight, deceived by the prior's boldness, said, with humility, 'Pardon my warlike blood, which fires beyond all control, and leads my judgment astray. You shall afflict me with penance for the disrespect I have shown you, when this slain child is bestowed out of my sight in the grave, if I do not lay my weary self by his side, and so escape all further sorrow. And now, as I remember,' said he, 'you are correct in the main points. I know that Hugh was in the Jew's house last evening, for he told me he was going there. I know that you were in the

garden of that house, for I heard and saw you there ; and that my son had been cast into the well, I have proof, also ; for I saw some substance beneath the water, though I did not know it was the body of my Hugh.'

'Yes,' thought the prior, 'you did see me there, and I was on your path before you saw me ; and but for the accident which befel the child, there, you might have met before now a fate you little anticipated.'

It will be necessary to remind our readers that there was some mystery connected with the disposal of Lord Hugh's property, as left by Lady Helen ; and that with this mystery the prior was connected, so much so, that there were suspicions abroad of the confessor having been destroyed by the prior for the sake of the money, which had disappeared with that priest. Now, as one evil deed is sure to bring on others in its train, it is likely these reports were true ; for the prior had, the preceding evening, been tracking the footsteps of Lord Hugh with some sinister design, from which he was only deterred by the accidental fall of the child into the well over which he was leaning. This design of the prior would, doubtless, never have been conceived without adequate motives ; and what motives so probable as those of fear for the consequence of a discovery of past guilt ? His plans were laid with artifice. He contemplated a general gratification of his bad passions. The hatred he entertained against Grosteste, bishop of Lincoln, was to be satisfied ; his avarice was to be glutted with the Hebrew merchant's wealth, which he purposed sharing with the legate and the earl of Lincoln ; and the pains he had taken to add Sir Hugh as another martyr and saint to the Romish list, were to be recompensed by the abbacy he coveted. Gesta, also, was to be disposed of, as he had been too much concerned in the confessor's disappearance for the prior to suppose himself safe whilst he lived in the city—and it was necessary that the Jew's daughter should know a change of fate, for she was the heiress to the riches of Jocenus ;

and for this branch of the scheme of the prior of Icanno, there were many other reasons which will be seen hereafter. There were other divisions and subdivisions of his scheme, which all united in one to as diabolical an end as ever man devised.

It is plain that the capacity of the prior's understanding was large in one property thereof—which is more rare than any other ; we mean that of contemplating at one time, and with clearness, a variety of circumstances.

This power that distinguished his mind enabled him to survey on all sides the dark plot he had determined upon, and to elaborate it to completeness ; it kept his attention fixed on it, and would be sure to bind his heart more tenaciously to its development, until the final moment of its triumph or defeat.

'My lord,' said the prior, 'you know that from different parts of England had arisen the cry among peasants—The Jews crucify our children in derision of the Saviour ! That cry has been too little heeded by the church. It is to you, my lord, that we must look for being upheld in the course of justice. If you screen the offenders from punishment, you will bring upon yourself much odium. I speak boldly, as beseems my office.'

'As heaven is my hope,' exclaimed the knight, raising the cruciform hilt to his lips with solemnity, while his eyes rested on his son, by the side of which he stood upright, 'I will oppose no obstacle to the discovery and punishment of those who have done this deed ! No : but I will further it to the last need—so prosper me, Holy Mary !'

'And now, my lord,' said the prior, 'since your sorrow perhaps unfits you for conducting this inquiry, will you trust your cause with me ?'

'Yes ; see to it in what manner you will, in my name, promptly,' answered the knight ; then stooping over the child, he kissed its lips and cheek, with pangs that found no vent. 'O my poor boy !' he exclaimed, 'thou art lost as soon as found.'

With pathos he continued, 'I thought to fasten spurs upon thy heels, sweet Hugh, and to buckle on thy knightly harness! I thought to see the eagle glance of the Gants burning in this blue eye—and to see this hand of thine grow hard, and strike the valiant strokes of manhood!' The crusader walked to the door. 'My hopes are over!' said he, 'I have lost my all in him!'

'My Lord De Gant,' said the prior, 'I share your distress: for the child was dear to me; but I comfort myself with the assurance that before the legate of his holiness, the pope, has finished his visit to Lincoln, the destroyer of Sir Hugh, and all who have participated in the deed, will have received their reward; and that the martyred boy's body will be as that of a hallowed saint in the temple which overlooks our city of Lincoln, and to which thousands of pilgrims shall yet come from distant counties to worship at his lofty shrine.'

CHAPTER XIII.

GESTA was making inquiry at the hall of the Jews, and elsewhere, concerning Jocus. But he could obtain no clue by which to discover where he was, or what had happened to him. He had not yet acquainted Leoni with the merchant's disappearance, and that young Hebrew, being still in ignorance of the event, prepared to pay a visit of a peculiar nature to the Jewish heiress. His rich relative had died suddenly—that night on which he and Gesta visited the Witch of the Water-side, and there existed no reason that he could see why he should not now openly make to Judith, as speedily as possible, a declaration of his attachment.

'Now, mother,' said Leoni, presenting himself before his parent, in mourning, and in an upright position, calculated to display the proportions of his excellent figure, 'shall I succeed with the lady, or shall I come back to you, to wear the willow all my days?' A rather anxious sigh followed these words; but he passed it off with a smile as

his mother surveyed him from head to foot.

'Moses, the barber, has spoilt your hair,' said the old Jewess. 'He shall never see a silver penny of mine again.'

Leoni threw on his black locks a cap, of the Jewish mortar shape. A fine perfume issued from the hair which was pressed down.

'There!' cried the old woman, 'was ever such a scent for a true-born Israelite? Can't my son count as many mortgages as Jocus? why then should he use a paltry essence that makes his head smell like a lurcher-dog's coat?' His tunic was next found fault with. The fine black fur that trimmed the skirts and sleeves was too mean for a suitor who had come into the possession of so many lands and fees, she said, although it was handsome and costly, as any fur that could be obtained. When she glanced at the empty belt that encircled his waist, she exclaimed, 'That beautiful dagger you have below stairs, would look gallantly here, but the laws of these English we sojourn among deny it! Every fool may carry his poinard and sword in the streets but a Jew!'

'It is here, mother, you see, in spite of the law!' said Leoni, drawing from his breast a silver hilted dagger, of fine workmanship.

'That is right! Put it back, Leoni, my son!' said old Iscara. 'Our fathers forbid I should hear of your using it! But so rich a Jew, as you are now should not carry himself like the meaner sons of Abraham!' Here she commenced polishing with the end of her upper gown the clasp which fastened his belt in front; and, stooping her head, which was enveloped in a white linen hood, with long ends, she breathed on the gold, and rubbed it as anxiously as if her son's happiness depended on the brightness it displayed.

'Will it do, mother?' asked Leoni, bending his head to kiss her brow, and sighing again, as the hour drew nigh that was to decide his fate. Iscara stepped back from him,

then admired the effect of his appearance. 'Go, my son,' said she, 'I would have kept you with me if it had been your will; but since you will marry this Judith—it must be so.'

'You have always been too kind to me, mother,' said Leoni. 'I will not leave you in your latter years; you shall live with us. But this is counting my wealth while it is at sea,' he added, smiling. 'Have I your good wishes for my success, mother!'

'The king of the whole earth bless you!' said Iscara. 'You are the comeliest Hebrew our nation can boast! I'll warrant Mistress Judith will not send you away without a kind word! Bless you!' And with these words they parted—Leoni to lay his proposal before Judith, and Iscara, to fret herself among the new servants, who were engaged in preparing a handsome dinner for her son on his return.

Perhaps Leoni placed some faith in his good looks, or at such a period of interesting suspense, derived from them a trifling addition to the material on which he based his hopes. As he mounted the steepest part of the Strait, and turned off on the left, opposite the palace, misgivings damped his spirits; but, by the time he had reached the house of Jocenus, he had satisfactorily dispelled them.

'He who allows himself to think of failure in such an expedition,' said he, 'takes the very means of insuring it. Why should she refuse me? I have many advantages not possessed by any other young man of our nation that she ever met with! I have as much ready coin as would supply the king of England for a year. I have parchments of all sorts, which will cost many a noble some hard sums to redeem. Her father's favour is a host on my side. No; I will not fear! And here Leoni pulled his cloak over one shoulder, as if he were glancing with his mental eye at the graces of his figure.

He was admitted into the court by Caleb, the merchant's servant whose

untrimmed beard wore a more neglected appearance than usual. Leoni well knew Caleb to be a thorough steady servant, with a heart that rarely troubled itself with anything out of the circle of his duties; therefore he was the more surprised by these signs of trouble which the man showed.

'Caleb, you look like a monk on a fast-day!' cried he. 'You are imitating Gesta; and by-and-bye the Hebrew merchant's servants and friends will be known everywhere by nothing but their doleful visages! Prythee worshipful Caleb, as you are a true son of Israel, let me know the cause of these miserable looks.' Caleb was a man of very prudent reserve; and, instead of replying, he turned to the store-houses to finish cleaning a very expensive saddle for a palfrey; swinging back the door on its hinges, he placed his back against it, while he directed Leoni to the house door.

'You will find Keturah there, master Leoni,' said he.

'No—Keturah is here,' said that maiden, stepping out from the store-house, laden with a number of pieces of Persian stuff, and silk, with which she crossed the court. Leoni followed her step, for nothing could be more welcome to him at the present than the sight of Judith's maid. Keturah stopped at the foot of the stairs, within the entrance-hall, to speak to him.

She possessed a quick humour, joined with prudence, a high spirit, and warm affections—qualities which had interested Leoni much, especially as they were combined with a light figure, and an animated eye. She showed too prominently the Jewish peculiarities of countenance, to be esteemed pretty! but Leoni thought her fascinating. Keturah's friends had once been higher in Hebrew society than they were at present, and she would not have been placed in service had not Jocenus proposed to take her to attend on his daughter, and afford her advantages beneath his roof she could not enjoy elsewhere.

As Keturah looked at Leoni, she

perceived the difference in his attire, and the air of embarrassment which overspread his features, and with all a woman's penetration surmised the truth. 'There was a certain formality, for which we do not attempt to account, in the answers she gave to his questions, after making so peculiar a discovery.'

'My uncle is dead, Keturah; do you not congratulate me on my change of fortune?'

'It would be strange, Master Leoni,' answered the maiden, 'to congratulate you on the death of a relative!'

'Very good,' cried he; 'but you know the old man lived far off, and was never intimate with me. But pray is your mistress alone?' he inquired.

'Alone, master Leoni,' answered Keturah.

'And will you entreat her to grant me an interview?'

'Certainly, master Leoni; inform me what I am to say.'

'How dull you are, Keturah—say anything—only bring me to her presence.'

'I am a poor servant here, master Leoni,' said the girl, 'what am I, that I should bring you to my lady's presence without her command? Give me the words that I am to speak, and I will repeat them.'

'Say then,' said Leoni, 'that I wish to confer with her on an affair of moment—and what can be of equal moment to me except death itself?' he continued, walking up and down, while Keturah proceeded to deliver the message. 'Marriage is the most important event in the life of man; and he who slights it, or treats it with disrespect, is in danger of ruining his peace and happiness for the remainder of his life. So will not I!' And with this determination, Leoni harkened to the sound of Keturah's footsteps, until they had receded beyond his hearing. 'She is longer than necessary,' said he, after standing for ten minutes in one position; 'I will venture up a step or two.' So saying, he advanced half way up the stairs, and threw off his cloak and cap, prepared himself for the

presence of a lady who beld in her hands the fiat of his earthly destinies.

'Surely she is coming now!—yes—that is her step,' said Leoni, completing the ascent of the stairs, as Keturah advanced from the gallery. With her finger she beckoned him to follow her; and then led him through the gallery to the library. His heart beat high, and he felt a triumph at hand, to which all other triumphs seemed now trifling.

Judith was standing to receive him; her hand rested lightly on the table, which was strewn with vellum manuscripts around a silver inkstand, raised on leopards. She had been sitting on a chair covered with blue damask, and gilded to correspond with the table; a goose-quill pen, inserted in a handle of pearl, set with rubies, rested on the desk, and near it was a slip of vellum, on which the Jewish lady had been writing as legible as the characters which the printing art has since learnt to produce. Had Leoni been less occupied with his own feelings, he would have noticed the disorder of hers. She was not dressed with that richness which was usual to her. A long undress robe of white silk was wrapped around her figure, with a silver cord as girdle. Not a jewel was to be seen on her person; her raven curls were disarranged; her brilliant colour was heightened by anxiety; her spiritual forehead was paler than wont; and her melting eyes were filled with intense feelings.

'Leoni,' said she, with a courteous gesture, 'you have something of importance to say to me.' There was something so straightforward in this address, that it deprived the Hebrew suitor of a great part of his hopes. Instead of answering at once, he stammered, and finally made a commonplace remark, concerning the demise of his uncle. She answered with perfect self-possession, though Leoni could not but feel that her heart was occupied with subjects more important to herself.

'But you were never in the merchant Mercado's house, I have heard

you say,' said Judith, speaking of Leoni's uncle.

'I never was; nor was he ever in mine but once,' replied Leoni. 'He always treated me unkindly until he made me his heir; and he conferred that favour on me, because he knew no one else whom the king and his feudal lord would permit him to make rich. It so happens that I am considered innoxious by the gentile tyrants; and my jewellery-work is approved by them so much, that they esteem me one of those Jews who are a necessary evil.' Having said this, he opened his real errand. Judith listened in silence, looking at the desk, with a crimsoned brow and neck, until he concluded by appealing to her father's wishes on the subject, and by attempting to salute her hand; then she drew back with coldness, intending to check his confidence.

'Leoni,' she said, 'my father's commands are next to those of heaven with me; but neither heaven nor my father, would enforce me to give my hand without my heart! therefore, I beg you, neither deceive yourself, or distress me. I will withdraw; my handmaids shall attend you, sir; and if you will take any refreshments, our house is open to you.' With a dignified curtesy, she turned to the saloon door.

'Madam,' said Leoni, 'leave me not, until I have said a few more words on my behalf!—I entreat you hear me! You are offended with me for appearing so certain of my suit. I am a presumptuous fellow—but, madam—' Leoni stopped; his vanity was hurt, that he had nothing but apologies to urge; yet all his preconcerted speeches were forgotten; all his talent for persuasion had evaporated. Judith reminded him that he was detaining her, and this increased his confusion. The awkwardness of the moment, was dispelled by the generous spirit which lay beneath his vanity, and by the returning kindness of the offended lady, who, becoming willing to be conciliated, listened to his broken sentences, finally pardoned him freely, and invited him to a seat

near her, as a token that his peace was made.

'I have brought with me a trifling present, made by my hands,' said Leoni, 'if you will deign to accept it from them.' So saying, he produced a golden box, and touched a spring at the side—the lid flew up, and he took out a dazzling tiara for the head, necklace, earrings, stomacher, and ring, of diamonds, of a new pattern, and laid them on the table; then followed a pair of armlets, composed of gold and silver threads, with diamonds, and a purse curiously wrought, of great value—the whole forming a set which would have been a dowry for a princess.

Judith looked at them with admiration:—'They are very beautiful,' she said. 'I give you many thanks, but I cannot do them proper honour; for it would not become me to accept gifts of such richness from one who I am compelled to deny in a matter which he flatters me by saying lies near his heart, and in which his happiness is much concerned.—I pray you excuse me.'

'Lovely Judith, put me not to such pain and mortification,' said Leoni, 'at least take my present, if you will not take me. Moses, our lawgiver, vouch for me, I will not trouble you, if my suit is so disagreeable, by forcing it further! In the name of freedom, Judith, believe me, you shall not be persecuted by me any more—only take my gift! If you deny me this, I shall think you do not duly weigh the uncomfortable humiliation, to which you have reduced me. As I am a Hebrew, I thought I was almost secure of your favour, as Jocenus himself encouraged my ambition.'

His good temper was invincible; and it required no small effort on Judith's part to resist his lively solicitations to accept the present. But her discretion was equal to her beauty, and mildly, but firmly, she drew herself back from the ornaments, saying with emotion—'I will have none of these exquisite trinkets—I thank you most truly—but take them back. I am motherless, Leoni!

and it behoves me, now that I am severed from my only living defender and guide, to act for myself, as the daughter of such a man should act. Think not but I shall keep this gift it my remembrance, though I receive it not; and I shall be as much indebted to you, if you will, as you have said, resolve to go no further, on what must prove a losing venture. My friendship I pledge to you; and believe me you shall be well reported to my father, when I am so blest as once more to enjoy his society.'

These words drew on an explanation regarding the absence of Jocenus; and Leoni undertook to assist Gesta in his search after the merchant, but Judith, pleased as she was with the offer, hesitated to accept it; her sense of delicacy making her disinclined to lay herself under any obligation to one who had professed love for her. Leoni relieved her of this difficulty by giving her his word to relinquish all hope of her hand. She entered into conversation with him. She told him that Gesta and Caleb endeavoured to persuade her that her father might have found it necessary to go on to Newark before returning to his home; but she could scarcely think it likely. Certainly he might have sent a message to her by some acquaintance which had not reached her, and so have satisfied himself that she would not have been unhappy on his account.—What did Leoni think?

Leoni replied in such a manner as to encourage this suggestion, and proposed to go himself to Newark to satisfy her mind. 'If the merchant is not there,' said he, 'you may expect to receive the tidings before nightfall; if he is there, I may stay longer, as I have some orders to receive in Newark from my customers for jewellery-work, and Jocenus himself may return to assure you of his safety.'

'Jehovah grant he may!' exclaimed Judith, 'I am miserable indeed, Leoni, while there exists uncertainty on such a point.'

'I would advise you to be as calm

as possible, until the expiration of to-morrow,' said Leoni; 'by that time you will have received some decisive information.'

'You advise me to calmness, Leoni,' said Judith, 'I tell you friend, nothing but the sight of my dear father will make me calm.'

Little time was lost in deliberation. Leoni arose with the haste of one who had an important object in view. With a very ill grace he replaced the ornaments in the box. 'And now, madam,' said he, 'I have one boon to ask before I go—nor is it a slight one.'

'I have called you friend,' said Judith, 'and I suppose you think yourself entitled to the privileges of one. What is the boon, Leoni?'

'I wish an answer to a bold question that concerns me.'

'Speak the question,' said Judith, 'and then I shall judge whether it may be answered or no.'

Leoni noticed the reserve which pervaded her manner, as she spoke these words, but he was determined to be satisfied concerning Gesta's prospects. 'Would it be possible for my friend, your cousin, to attain to that place in your affections to which I have unsuccessfully aspired?' said he. 'The next happiness to gaining you for myself, fair Judith, would be to gain you for him. Upon my word, though so strange in his ways, he is a worthy fellow. I would wager my own existence, lady, that he loves you better than his life. His devotion to you has a kind of completeness about it which is seldom seen. His mind is deep, and its depths are filled with your image, and with yours only. Leoni thus pleaded for Gesta with ardency of feeling, concluding by pressing the question—'Has my friend any interest in your affections?—Is there any hope for him—or must he be doomed to lasting pain and disappointment?'

Judith first exhibited marks of surprise, then of embarrassment, then of sorrow. She was on the point of replying, but checked herself; presently she said, at intervals—

'The depth of my cousin's mind, none know so well as I.—That he had a friend besides me who appreciated it fully, I was not till now aware. Yes, Leoni! Gesta's thoughts have gone beyond common ken! His soul is of a fine texture—his feelings are alive to every breath of affection! But it has been his misfortune to suffer from a sickly constitution of body, and from a diseased fancy. I have been blind to what you tell me—you are, perhaps, correct;—yet I can scarcely bring myself to believe it. If it is so, I can only say—unhappy Gesta!' A burst of tears came with the last exclamation, which distressed Leoni, who regretted that he should have introduced the subject while her mind was so disturbed with other considerations. He was earnest in his apologies, and declared he could not forgive himself. But Judith subdued her feelings, and reaching out her hand to him, permitted him to bend his head over it with silent sympathy. 'Now, for the present, Leoni, adieu,' said she. 'You will, under the permission of heaven, either return from Newark by to-morrow evening, or send me consolation in the person of my dear father himself—am I understand you so?'

'Exactly so,' said Leoni; 'and I entreat you again, support yourself until the expiration of that time, on the hope of the return of the merchant himself. Under any circumstances, believe that it will be my greatest happiness to be of service to you, dear lady.'

They had, the last few minutes, been walking down the statue-gallery, the end of which being reached, Judith opened a door there for Leoni; and he took his leave.

Gesta had been passing from the head of the stairs to his own room, when the gallery-door opened. Perceiving who was there he had slackened his steps, so as to hear the parting words betwixt Leoni and Judith, from which he could not fail to understand that they were on excellent terms.

As Leoni began to descend the

stairs, he looked on one side and saw the deformed individual for whom he had been pleading, standing in front of his chamber doorway, at the end of a cross gallery. The feet of the Hebrew seemed rivetted to the step on which he had paused in his descent. His eyes were fastened on Gesta, as if fascinated!—He was affected, and even alarmed. Fierce jealousy and deadly rage seemed to transform the disproportioned figure on which he gazed, into that of a wild beast. Leoni thrust his hand into his breast and sought the handle of his dagger. So terrible a display of passion he had never seen before. Gesta motioned for Leoni to turn back and approach the chamber by which he stood, and Leoni, after a hasty consideration of the present claims on his time and attention, did so. Gesta fastened the door after they had entered, then confronted the man whom he considered his enemy, with a scowl. Affecting a pleasantry which, under the circumstances, made Leoni shudder, he cried—

'I see by your dress, my friend, what has happened. You are rich, and a wooer here—ha—ha—Leoni! I have hit it have I not? The dull sable so well becomes your figure, as the lady thinks, that she would fain see it to better advantage—in a wedding suit—eh, Leoni—am I not right?'

'You are right in some of your guesses—but not in all,' said Leoni.

'In all!' exclaimed Gesta, grasping his gaberdine which presently rent under his hand. 'I give you joy to tell you a strange truth, I have hitherto hated the world; but when you are married to Judith, I shall call paradise a desert to it! I have long been restless, as all have seen—but *then* I shall give myself up to joy!—I will laugh as loud as any fool whatever jests you let drop!—I will not sadden the happy meetings of that bright time!—I will be their buffoon—their butt! And now I think of it, the Christian barons, and all great men, everywhere keep their dwarfs and jesters, who admire their parti-coloured

coats, when they have no other amusement. Why should not I fill such an honourable post under yourself and your lady? A fool's motley would suit this figure of mine!—ha—will you think of it?"

'I think,' said Leoni, 'that you will hereafter repent this boyish violence.'

'Boyish!' repeated Gesta, leaping on Leoni, and grasping him by the throat. 'Boyish! I will show you that a man's animosity lies under this boyish violence!' Leoni at this moment did not lose his presence of mind, and held off the left arm of the slave of passion. The right hand of Gesta closed tighter on his throat, and strangulation would have ensued, but the fingers all at once relaxed their pressure. A groan of agony pierced the ears of Leoni, and the form of the sufferer lay insensible at his feet.

Some minutes passed before Leoni recovered from the disorder into which he had been thrown. His first impulse was to leave the offender on the floor to recover as he might. The resentment he had begun to entertain against him on the night when they visited the witch, was now confirmed, and he was not without a desire of retaliation for the attack he had experienced. But as he was leaving the room he saw blood issuing from the mouth and nose of Gesta, and he scarcely knew what to do. Compassion prevailed; and the prostrate figure was lifted on the pallet on which it usually reposed. Leoni loosened his gaber-dine at the neck and breast, and found three withered flowers fastened next his heart, with a long and thin lock of shining black hair, which he needed not to be informed had been shorn from the head of Judith. The flowers were the crocus, the violet, and daisy, which she had given to Gesta. Leoni touched not the lover's treasures, but covered them as something sacred. The swoon of Gesta continuing unbroken, the Hebrew opened the window to admit the air; in doing so his eye fell on the box he himself had taken from the witch's tower and given to

Gesta on account of the direction which was upon it. Curiosity induced him to raise the lid—and he saw a bundle of clothing within, which he did not touch; but on the top of that bundle were the following doggrel rhymes, which Leoni twice perused:—

Though Hebrew named—you are no Jew;

And Christians would disown you too.
Look on your shoulder—where the bone
Hath from its proper socket grown!

Look on your breast—there signs are
seen

Where the finger of a witch hath been!—
In one place blue, in one place red—
A spectre branch and a serpent's head!

It happened that at this moment Leoni remembered that Gesta had been often rallied on his Nazarene cast of face. At once he was impressed with the belief that these lines applied to him, and as soon as that impression was communicated to his mind, he proceeded to satisfy himself on the point. He had before removed the gaber-dine from Gesta, so far, that it was with ease he now drew it off from the shoulder and breast, where he saw the signs. That on the shoulder consisted of a blue mark, in the shape of a misletoe-branch; that on the breast was red in colour, and exhibited something like a snake's head. Leoni read the rude lines again, and again examined the signs—then replaced the gaber-dine on Gesta's breast, and hastened to return the lines to the box; but his curiosity was rather stimulated than satisfied by what he had seen, and without considering a moment, he drew out the bundle of clothing and unbound it. A ragged dirty frock and cap, such as might have been worn by a boy of three years old, fell to the floor, with other articles to complete the dress. Leoni turned them over, but hearing a moan from Gesta, crammed them into the box without any attention to order—the frock being half within and half without the lid. Leoni faced the pallet as Gesta opened his eyes and recovered his recollection. The latter sprang up.

'Keep off my person,' said Leoni,

'or I will not be answerable for your safety in this room another instant.'

'I will not harm you,' said Gesta.

'I will take care you shall not,' said Leoni, who thought Gesta's voice now sounded like Myrza's, an idea which led him to connect the two individuals by other points of resemblance.

'Put by your dagger,' said Gesta; 'I have not the strength to attempt again to do you an injury.' Leoni still kept the weapon in his hand.

'It is sufficient for me,' said he, 'that you *have* attempted it—I will take care that that attempt is not repeated.'

'I swear to you, Leoni, it shall not be repeated!' exclaimed Gesta. 'These dreadful sensations!' he cried, after a silence, turning his face to the wall, and passing his hand over his breast. 'Shall I call for assistance?' said Leoni.

'No,' answered Gesta. 'There exists not a person who could do me good. Once, your friendship was a cordial to me—that time has passed. You have destroyed me.'

Leoni wished to explain to him the state of the case—but pride prevented. 'Accuse me as you will,' said he, 'but observe, there will come a time when your heart will accuse *you*! and I know you well enough to be certain that you will find it difficult to relieve yourself of its censures.'

'I find it difficult *now* to relieve myself from them,' said Gesta; 'very difficult! Conscience reproaches—it gives me no rest! Crime, which you never even imagined, has left a fiend there, which is the most awful of all whom our sins have drawn up from the infernal pit—I mean that fiend, REMORSE!' He went to the window. Then continued—'To you, my heart was once open—but it has long been closed against you. Now, for the first time, Leoni, I will inform you of the real cause of my estrangement—it has been CRIME!—shudder—while I speak! There was a devil once found me at the witch's tower, and poured poison in my ear! I was seeking to know how I might be made rich—for, ah,

Leoni! the poverty and dependence of my condition under Jocus, galled me to madness! I saw it would bar me from making an honourable suit to Judith, whom I have loved!—ever since I was able to distinguish her features from those of other maidens. I say he—the prior of Icanno—poured poison in my ear—the effects of which I shall feel throughout eternity! He wanted a fit instrument for some of his villainies—and he chose *me*! Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, when he destroyed our first parents, this serpent won my ear with hopes of gain and honour! He successfully imposed on me; and the prior, during that, and subsequent meetings, made me all he desired.'

'Did you say he was at the witch's tower?' asked Leoni. 'The superior of a monastery!—a priest!—a punisher of sorcery!—and the persecutor of that very witch! Could it be possible that *he* was there?'

'Aye,' cried Gesta, shaking his head, 'he was there, indeed! I have too much cause to remember it! But do you know why he so persecutes this Myrza? Not for her mysterious arts—not for the cramps and agues which she spreads around—nor for the rot, or the lameness, which it is affirmed she bestows on cattle—neither is it for the unhealthy mists which she is charged with drawing up from the fens—nor for the lightning which she is supposed to draw from the clouds. But it is because she has thwarted some of his black projects! Self-deceived as that woman may be in some respects, Leoni, and unlawful as may be some of her practices—she has done this! I have entertained an antipathy against her, but I have had little cause for it. Her appearance is forbidding—her voice is harsh—she is an outcast from society of all sorts—and a miserable creature—What of that? I am a counterpart of herself in all these particulars. I have had little reason to hate Myrza. She has been the means, Leoni, of saving these hands from the pollution of *blood*. You tremble. Oh, what would I give to

feel that this I am telling you was a delusion! What would I give to tear from my memory the guilt of that period! I was warned by her, that if I fulfilled my part of the engagement I had entered into with the prior, he would not fulfil his part—that I should destroy my soul, and get no advantage! She was right!’ he cried, clenching his hand, as he drew nearer to Leoni. ‘She was right—as you shall hear! The confes—’

‘Hark!’ interrupted Leoni; ‘something extraordinary is going on below.’

‘And there are crowds in the street outside!’ exclaimed Gesta.

‘The Jew’s quarter is usually so still,’ said Leoni, ‘that this noise is alarming!’

‘It bodes no good to the Hebrews!’ cried Gesta. ‘Do you hear?—that was Keturah’s scream! She comes up the stairs—Caieb is with her—and, as I am a wretch, they are followed by Gentiles!’

‘Gentiles!’ exclaimed Leoni: ‘and why are gentiles in the house of a Jew? The merchant absent, too—and his daughter alone and defenceless! How is this, Gesta? If you have been traitorous to him who has fed and instructed you since your infancy—you do not deserve to live!’

‘I forgive you that suspicion,’ said Gesta. ‘I have told you that I was once inclined to evil, and you think I am so still. But you do not know that an angel since then has whispered to me of better things.’ He pressed his hands on his heart; and the motion directed Leoni’s thoughts to the withered flowers and the lock of hair which lay there. Directly he understood that Judith had exerted a beneficial influence over the mind of her supposed cousin; but that the violence of his passion for her prevented that influence being as fully efficacious as it would otherwise have been.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER Leoni had gone, Judith resumed her writing. Having concluded by subscribing her name, she prepared to seal the vellum, in the

form of a billet, first perusing it aloud to herself. The contents ran thus:—

‘To the Christian Hermit, by the swan pools, in the lower town of Lincoln.—You once instructed my beloved mother, Claribel, the Jewess, in your faith. You once prepared her to meet your prophet in that paradise wherein I trust she now dwells. You have, since her death, sent for me, desiring to teach the daughter those doctrines which the mother embraced. But I have preferred the religion of Israel. I have not been willing to have my peace disturbed by teachings so different from those of my father. He was pained by my mother’s avowal of your creed, when she was about to die, and he was only comforted by her wish that he should instruct me himself in the Jewish belief. I have received from you a missal, some of the prayers of which I value, but I cannot find in the Scriptures any warranty for the rest, which seem addressed to saints and angels. These two classes of beings I have understood to be too much engaged in worshipping Jehovah to seek worship for themselves. My principal reason for addressing you is this:—I have received from you, in addition to the book which you use in your masses, a most precious gift, a letter written by my mother, which she left in your care to be given to me when I had reached full age. I cannot look on this letter without emotions of awe, love, and sorrow. I cannot read the earnest entreaties which it contains, that I would become a Christian, without the strongest bias to Christianity. But before I can believe that your prophet is the true Messiah, I must have converse with you, and I would fain see you at your hermitage as early as you may please to appoint. I would not willingly have my faith determined by any fallible being—no—not even by the mother whose memory is so dear to me! But if Israel hath erred in rejecting your prophet, I would desire to renounce Israel’s error.’

Here Judith stopped, and said, ‘Shall I write concerning Hugh? It is so strange he comes not! Shall I say—when you see my friend tell him he forgets me? No. I can hardly think the hermit approved of the dear boy’s visits to this house. No;—I must wait with patience a little longer. He is occupied with his newly-found parent, and too much intent on hearing stories of knights and Moslems in Palestine, to think of me. Yet methinks my

Lord Hugh, himself, might have been here. He cannot be so anxious for my father, as my foolish heart, and his professions, led me to hope. Perhaps he has been talking with the prior of Icanno, who may have persuaded him how disgraceful an offence on his part it is to have the least affection for an Hebrew, and so he has cast us off. Be it so !' she exclaimed, ashamed of the pain which she felt. 'I will no longer be enslaved by my feelings, but when I meet my father again, I will throw myself on his breast, give up my secret to his keeping, and learn firmness from his lips. Were he as some parents are—selfish, reserved, and wanting in friendliness toward me—I could not give him my confidence so entirely ; but he is full of sympathy with my weakness, and not proud, because he knows it to be weakness ; he makes me sensible of his superiority by the humility and tenderness with which he enters into my inferiority ; he makes me honour him as my father, by loving me as a friend ; he assumes nothing, and hence my heart is ever ready to acknowledge that he knows much. I am blest in such a father !' Judith finished reading the billet, which concluded with the following sentences :—

'My mind is so occupied with apprehension, that I should not, at the present time, have troubled you on the subject of religion, were it not that I am conscious of the importance of settling my views of that eternal world, to which Gentiles and Jews are alike hastening—were it not that I am sensible of the folly of postponing the consideration of such a subject—were it not that I feel the need of comfort under tribulation, of such a comfort as no earthly loss, danger, or suffering, could take from me—which being fastened on something immutable, might be incapable of change, and might be carried with me beyond this life. My father has lived much apart from all those of our nation, who dwell beyond the boundaries of our own residence. I have been kept by him entirely separate from them, but by birth, name, and profession we belong to that despised, but sacred people, and we must share in the persecutions they endure. Convinced of the danger which environs us, I would be prepared for its encroachments ; and anticipate even the horrors of a dungeon and death.'

This allusion contained a prescience of the future, of which Judith was ignorant. But when she had sent away the billet she walked along the gallery, engaged in serious reflections. Among other things, she recalled the conversation of Leoni, and the information he had imparted relative to Gesta's attachment for her. This explained her cousin's moodiness of temper, and his melancholy. She remembered the reserve he had shown towards her, his idolatry on other occasions, the bitterness of his looks and language when any other person was named who professed to entertain a regard for her, with many other circumstances confirmatory of Leoni's words.

She had reached the door by which Leoni had left the gallery, when the trampling of feet, and a mixture of different voices, sounded from the lower part of the house. The first sensation of alarm which chilled her veins, and took away her breath, was followed by the thought that her father might have met with some accident, and was brought home in a dying condition. Instantly she hastened down stairs. She had scarcely reached the bottom when Keturah ran past her, screaming with terror, and the Hebrew lady had not time to turn back to inquire of her servant the nature of the disturbance, before the giant Garston, the keeper of the town gaol, with half a dozen of his men, rushed up after the girl, to the cross gallery above.

'My honoured lady,' said Caleb, 'do not fear. The fellows say they only come for master Gesta.'

'Only for Gesta !' exclaimed Judith : 'savage-looking persons like these come for Gesta ! And why do they seek him here in this manner ?'

'They have not told us, my lady,' said Caleb. 'They forced their way in. It was Garston, the governor of the prisons near the Jew's Hall, who told me they had come for master Gesta.'

Judith waited not to hear more, but bade him endeavour to find Leoni, then she learnt that he was

still here. 'You, Belaset,' said she to that maiden, 'summon all your courage, and inspire the Jews who work under Caleb, to be ready to defend the establishment which supports them! She proceeded with a quick step up toward Gesta's apartment, whither the intruders had gone.

Garston had fastened on Keturah when he entered the house, and had threatened her with ill usage if she did not lead him to the spot where Gesta was. The deformed Jew was in the house, said Garston, and he must be given up, or the house would be burnt, and all that were in it, before another rising of the sun! Keturah escaped from the gaol-keeper's gripe, and flew up to apprise Gesta of his danger, that he might escape. Leoni, forgetting all but his friendship for Gesta, burst open the door of a closet, and would have hid him there, and have defended him with his life, but he refused to secrete himself, and stood in the middle of the room, when Garston pounced on him.

'This is the crab we're in want of, my fellows! Fasten his claws with those bits of iron you have got with you!' said he to his myrmidons, grasping the shoulder of his captive, while his grim features expressed a barbarous delight. Two of the men sprang to obey their leader, and the rattling of a number of pieces of metal were heard on the floor, as one threw himself on his knee to bind a chain on one of Gesta's feet. He did not oppose them, but looked on silently while the pieces of iron were about to be screwed on his wrists.

'Shall I submit to see this!' cried Leoni, with vehemence. 'Submit to see another who bears the name of Jew, dragged to certain death! No, by all the wrongs of Israel! Full well I know the prisoners of Garston never escape his demoniacal clutches! My friend shall never be taken to his dens while I have the spirit of a Hebrew! Away, ye devils!—take off the irons, or ye are dead men!' He had wrapped his mourning cloak round his left arm, cast his cap away, and was

standing between Gesta and the two men who held the screws in their hands, when Judith glided into the room. Leoni's dagger, which was flashing before the eyes of the men, dropped, and they failed to take advantage of the opportunity, smit into passiveness before the presence of a being so unlike themselves. Garston stared at her with admiration and wonder, and drew back to the farthest limits of the room, as she stepped to the side of Gesta, and inquired why he was thus treated. Gesta looked at her with agony, and taking her hand, raised it to his lips: a tear fell on that hand—it was the first he had shed for years. 'Judith,' said he, 'this tear is not shed for my coming fate, but for my parting with you! This is the last time I shall behold you!'

'Cousin—you cannot mean what you say!' exclaimed Judith. 'The last time!—how! Have I not already sorrow enough, but I must lose you!'

'It must be so!' said Gesta. 'I must go from hence for ever! I have put myself in the power of a man who is as deadly as a scorpion, and I must fulfil the penalty. Leoni! give me your hand! Forgive the injustice I have done you! When next we meet it will be in a far-off land; there Justice will sway her equal balances with a steady hand. It suits the prior of Icanno, now Lord Hugh has arrived, to cut me off for the death of the confessor, lest I should become a witness against him. Resistance is useless! Yet it shall go hard,' he added, 'but that before these lips are mute in death, I will leave an undisputed testimony of his hypocrisy and perfidy! Approach, gaol-keeper,—and manacle me as you will!'

'No—no!' exclaimed Judith, waving Garston back with her hand: 'stay a little.'

'Why, for that matter,' growled the man of office, 'I don't care if we do;—only let us have a can of Malmsey. This is thirsty work.'

'That you shall have immediately,' cried Judith.

While the fellows were drinking

immense quantities of the wine which had been provided for them, the servants of the house were collected in a group outside the door.

'Ah!' cried Gesta, addressing himself to Judith, 'now indeed do I remember, with fondness, all our happy early days. Think of them sometimes!—by me they will only be forgotten when I cease to live! There is something I would say—' he broke off with embarrassment, looking toward the box which Leoni had opened. He started, as he perceived the frock partly hanging out from the lid; catching the eye of Leoni, his face became suffused with colour, and the jeweller felt ashamed of the curiosity which he had indulged, through which much unnecessary pain was given to Gesta. 'The articles you saw there,' said Gesta, speaking to Leoni, 'such as they are, once sufficed for this figure of mine. How shall I speak the truth to you, Judith? My relationship to you has been the only green spot in my life!—and now to lose that—it is bitter! I am no cousin to you, Judith!—your father is my benefactor—but not my uncle! That pair, whom we have so often regretted together—were not my parents. Their child died in the cottage of the nurse who had charge of him—for that nurse I received this box, and I had an interview with her yesterday—she stole me from my mother, and gave me to Jocus as his nephew! I am nothing to you by birth, Judith—I am not even one of your tribe!—I am, the woman has informed me, the son of an outcast Nazarene—no better!'

'But she has not told you who your parents really are?'

'She has not,' replied Gesta; 'but this I know, my father is in his grave, and some persons think it would be better were my mother there too.'

'I think I have seen your mother,'—said Leoni—'I mean Myrza—the witch.'

'Ah, if you think so,' cried Gesta, 'the conjecture is true; for I have had the same idea—though I have repelled it as much as possible.

What a discovery! What a terrible humiliation! It is too much for a being bowed down as I am!' He sighed, and leaned on Leoni for support, while a spasm of pain darted across his breast. Recovering, he assumed a composure that had long been foreign to his aspect:—'But this is weak!' he exclaimed: 'I speak as if the world were just opening before me, instead of closing for ever behind me. The sufferings to which I may be soon subjected—appal me but little; terrible as they may be—I have endured inward ones already! Death would be rather a blessing than a curse! There exists no reason why I should not welcome it. Let then the past and the present melt before me—and time melt with them! Let eternity unclothe her awful gates, and let violence impel my feet over the threshold! Let me perish from the paths of men! Let my name be blotted out on the earth! I am content.'

'Nay, but Gesta,' said Judith, 'dislike of life, is no certain sign of fitness of death. Ah, believe, my brother believe, that to pass into the presence of the King of kings, armed only with the false resolution that despair imparts—is not good. Hope that you will yet fulfil the ordinary term of your life. If you must go with these men—go; but go without giving yourself up in imagination to horrors that your friends here will sacrifice, if necessary, all they possess, to avert.'

'Put me in possession of the real circumstances of the confessor's death,' said Leoni, 'and I will do all that man can do to effect your liberation.'

'I,' said Judith, 'will, if nothing better can be done for you, appeal to Lady Isabel, sister to the bishop of Lincoln; it is said she has much influence with the prior of Icanno, who is your accuser.'

'Peril not yourself for me, Judith,' said Gesta. 'Leoni's offer I am constrained to accept: because I know I should be misunderstood if I rejected it. Hark you, Leoni; I will give you the recital you have asked.' Judith stepped back; and

an important conversation took place between Leoni and Gesta. Presently they joined Judith, and Leoni's countenance showed anxiety for Gesta although Judith observed that his sympathy for him seemed increased, and that his determination to serve him was stronger.

'Lady,' said Leoni, 'Gesta has not deserved these irons.'

'That I can easily believe,' said Judith.

'He has erred,' continued Leoni, 'but not in the way the prior would have the world think;—he has been guilty—but not in a degree to justify these proceedings.'

'If,' said Judith, looking at Gesta with a manner calculated to strengthen him, and to give him confidence, 'you have offended against the law of this country, though not by the commission of any crime—yet if you have at all offended—it may be just and wise to bear the indignities which this Garston puts on you for a short period, until the legate, or the judiciary of England, (who I hear all sit in the palace of Lincoln, to hear cause of complaint, and to relieve the oppressed,) shall give you honourable freedom.'

'I have committed no capital offence—I have not offended the laws of this country,' said Gesta, 'further than by listening to and for a time participating in, the designs of one who I know has broken the laws—and who justly deserves the doom which he now brings upon me. But I was deceived by him!—my evil combination with him was not premeditated!—it was the result of passions. He was the hypocritical deluder. Not that I excuse myself, Judith—you will excuse me more than I excuse myself, when you shall hear, after I am gone from hence, Leoni's narrative of my acquaintance with the prior; the fruits of which have been misery, and will soon be—death. But do you dream Judith, that when I am in the hands of an enemy of this description, he will suffer me to escape his hands? Oh, no, think not so for a moment. I know that I take my last farewell of all here.'

'Taste me that wine,' thundered Garston, behind, to the servant who had brought him a fresh supply.—How know I, you currish infidel, but you have poisoned it with your Jewish mixtures?—Taste it—infidel thief.'

'Taste it,' echoed the gaol-keeper's subordinates.

'The fellows are becoming intoxicated,' said Gesta. 'Suffer them to draw nigh, and bear away their prisoner.'

Judith's countenance altered, and she said in a faltering voice to him. 'Gesta—I have spoken to you firmly—but now my heart sinks with weakness.—I know not how to part from you;—you were always so dear to me. You must not think that your sister Judith can ever be happy again, until you are free.' Keturah and Belaset, perceiving the agitation of Judith, approached her, and Keturah embraced her lady while she wept aloud.

'Go back—kind girls,' said Judith, disengaging herself from Keturah: 'Take leave of Gesta, and go back. What, Caleb; have you come to see the adopted son of my father take his farewell of us under such painful circumstances?—Come near—'

'Come near—Caleb,' repeated Gesta. Perhaps no one appeared more excited than this servant. To him, Gesta's deformities were nothing; he loved him as much as he was capable of loving any one.

'This is wonderful;—this is dismal!' he exclaimed. 'Tell me, dear master—what shall I do for you? Six stout Hebrews are behind—in the gallery,' he muttered; 'and the Nazarenes are but seven.' Gesta reasoned with him on the inutility of resistance, while Caleb seemed ready to choke with emotion. Part of the irons, which were but half secured on Gesta's limbs, dropped to the floor. The sound roused Garston and his men from their carousals, and rushing forward, they fastened the shackles. So great was the weight of the fetters put on Gesta, that his frame could scarcely sustain them—and his paleness told Judith

and Leoni the pain which the irons occasioned him. Leoni raised a cup of wine to his lips—he drank it eagerly, with thankfulness, but found no words.

'Stand aside!' roared Garston to the six Jewish labourers collected outside the room.

'Not till we have our lady's commands,' answered they, presenting a display of knives and dirks. Judith heard what passed, and came in time to prevent an affray.

'You have my commands,' said she; 'let the gaol-keeper and his men pass out. But,' she added, 'if they attempt to enter any part of this house which is not in their direct progress to the court—oppose them, for the sake of the master who has been so liberal to you.'

'We will, for the sake of the merchant of Israel—but for him we should have died for want of bread!' cried the Hebrew labourers; then, in obedience to her directions, three of them advanced before the gaol-keeper's band, and three waited to follow.

'Take heed,' continued Judith to the latter three, 'that the store-houses are not opened.'

'Our lives for them!' said the men.

'Be faithful in this peril, and my father shall reward you well,' said Judith, and returned into the room, where adieus, full of anguish, were being taken.

'Move along to your wooden cage, my bunch-breasted ape!' said the giant to his prisoner, grinning at the angry flash which shot from the eye of Gesta.

'Sir,' said Leoni to Garston, 'whatever authority you may have for fastening on the person of my friend these fetters, and for imprisoning him in your gaol, I am sure you have none for inflicting on him the taunts of your tongue!—and if they are repeated here, I swear by the holy lawgiver of my nation, you shall walk over my dead body before you shall bear him hence! Have you not one spark of the man left in you?—or are you an animal fit only to range the forests, and prey upon your kind?'

'I have other gyves besides these,' said Garston, shaking the chains attached to Gesta's irons, and giving one of his winks, at the same time pointing his thumb over it: 'I have cages for gay parrots as well as for apes;—my gallows will swing *two* infidels by the neck as well as one.'

Keturah and Belaset shrank back in horror from the speaker, while Judith, engrossed with wider apprehensions than they had conceived, and rendered calm by the force and depth of those apprehensions, came to the side of Gesta, and laying her hands on his manacled ones, again whispered to him to be of good courage. Leoni and herself, she strove to assure him, would not fail to procure his deliverance. It is impossible to describe the working of Gesta's heart as he saw the moments approach when all the scene must exist only in his memory. He drew the picture of his condition with too prophetic an accuracy, and quailed before it. Nor was Jocenus forgotten by him;—who could suppose he would be? The mind of Gesta was competent to estimate the merchant's noble character—his heart was large enough to love it.

'How can I express what I feel toward Jocenus?' said Gesta. 'Eternal thanks to him for his goodness to me! Since the first hour when the duplicity of the woman who stole me from my mother, placed me in his care, he has loaded me with benefits: which the stranger must be grateful for. He has permitted me your society, Judith! for which I bless him, although the permission has produced the greatest misfortune, as well as the greatest good, that ever befel me! Leoni—buy me another delay from the gaol-keeper, and let the door of this room, which I have called mine for twenty years, be closed on all but you and Judith. My parting with you both I would have unobserved.'

His wish was carried into effect. He rested the few last minutes of his stay in the house, Judith drooping on one side, and Leoni on the other.

'Tell your father, Judith,' said

Gesta, 'when you see him, that all the merchandise he has at different times entrusted to my care, has been dealt with faithfully. I speak as with my dying breath! But tell him that the prior would have persuaded me to be false to my trust!—and to betray you, Judith, to one of his patrons! Thus you may see the extent of his wickedness! If I may speak openly in Lincoln before I perish—I will so denounce him, that, instead of advancing to the dignity he aspires to, he shall be deprived of that which he has.'

'Can this be true!' cried Leoni.

'Aye,' said Gesta; 'nor did his schemes stop here. But I have said enough concerning myself and the prior—and now can only add, that the merchant is fallen into his hands; and if so, the only way to extricate him will be to go to the Lady Isabella, (whom you named, Judith, a few minutes ago), and to place the circumstances of the case before her. She knows more of the prior's true character, than any other person of her station; and, as you have remarked, it is said she has much influence over him. She is an excellent lady, of true piety; and though not without her prejudices against the Jewish people, yet, like Bishop Grosteste, her brother, she little regards distinctions, when the claims of humanity are to be heard.'

'I thought,' said Judith, 'that you supposed my father was at Newark!'

'Pardon the deception,'—said Gesta—'it was employed to comfort you while I was engaged in searching for him. Yet the thought did once cross my mind that he might be there—though I regret to say, after reflections have annihilated the hope.'

The darkness of the impending storm was now increased to the view of Judith; herself the object of secret designs!—her father in the hands of his dreaded enemy!—Gesta to be taken away. She saw it all—and gave way to dreadful perturbation.

'Nothing can be done for your relief,' said Gesta, 'until I am gone—

then, Leoni will assist you, I am confident.'

'I pledge myself before heaven and earth,' said Leoni, 'to do so.'

'So may happier days return!' exclaimed Gesta. 'And so may you,' he added, 'be united in peace and joy to—each other.'

'Stop!' cried Leoni, embarrassed, but glad of the opportunity offered to undeceive Gesta regarding the nature of the friendship between Judith and himself; 'you err. I came hither, as you suspected—a suitor; but I was leaving the house, when you saw me—a rejected one.—Rejected without a hope! I appeal to the lady herself.'

'It is true,' said Judith.

'Can it be,' said Gesta. 'Then Myrza was right!—No Jew shall win the maiden's heart.'

'But you are no Jew!' said Leoni.

This exclamation had nearly overthrown the self-possession of the prisoner; and a gleam of hope darted over his heart, and he felt as if, since the prophesy did not include him, he could go to prison with cheerfulness, sustained on this uncertainty just opened to him, better than on all the most solid reasonings philosophy could bring forward.

CHAPTER XV.

If there be one being on earth whom the imagination more clings to than another—if there be one about whom some tender and pleasing charm is ever shifting, it is that being whose mind opened with our own—whose finer tastes were formed congenial with our tastes—and whose pure affections mingled with our affections.

The 'Jew's Daughter,' though an only child, was not ignorant of the relationship of home and kindred; she had not applied the word brother to Gesta without feeling that tender friendship for him which her use of the word implied. She did regard him as a brother—and when he was gone, she found that the world had not another who could supply his place. The fine ties that intellectual companionship had wrought around them, were not to be broken by the discovery that he belonged not to her kindred.

Gesta, as well as Jocenus, was gone!—and the house, in its wealth looked gloomy. The merchant's voice was not heard in his office—Caleb moved in and out there, the sole director; his black brows contracted, his lips muttering, and his heart labouring under a load of care. When he went into the stables to feed the beautiful animals there, he gave vent to many groans, and with the fancy that trouble creates, he thought, as he stroked the merchant's barb, that the creature seemed uneasy for its master's absence: the handsome mule, which Gesta had been accustomed to ride, was tended with care, and patted with fondness.

'What will be the end of it all!' exclaimed the servant, moving into the storehouses where all the goods lay packed up, and arranged for removal. 'Here is the merchandise, but where is the owner? And where is my dear master, who put the things in this order? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, what will be the end of these troubles?' Having uttered this speech, Caleb turned over a bale of silk, and sat down on it in a desponding posture.

Judith walked through the apartments of her bower, unable to rest; and now so disturbed, that she was unable to think clearly. A cloud of sad presages seemed to make the air too thick for her to breathe in, and seeking a relief from them, she sat down in the saloon, and taking her harp, struck a medley of sounding chords on the strings. But, looking around, she saw neither her father nor Gesta—the two who had been so delighted to hear her psalmody!—who had been so lavish of their praises!—praises which she did not covet because they gratified her vanity, but because they proceeded from lips which were the indulgent echo of hearts that loved her.

It was now the anniversary of her mother's death, which Jocenus had kept as a day sacred to her memory. But he was not here to keep it now! Judith visited Claribel's tomb in the garden, and sat below it—and there she wept until her handmaids

remonstrated with her, and persuaded her to return to the house. 'My father!' she cried, as Belaset and Keturah supported her;—'O God, where is he?'

A wearisome night passed, and a Sabbath dawned; but the voice of praise was not heard in the Hebrew merchant's house. The household altar was without its presiding priest; and when the fair daughter of Jocenus endeavoured to officiate in his stead, she found herself unequal to the effort. Judith then shut herself in her silent chamber, and remained there until sunset.

The softness produced by her distress, occasioned Gesta's love for her to be more complacently reflected upon than she herself was aware. The length of time he had concealed it—the lowliness which had characterized it—these were points that she dwelt on again and again.

Gesta had told her he had only succeeded in tracing the merchant to the episcopal palace, and Judith surmised that her father must still be there; perhaps imprisoned, as Gesta was, on some false charge made against him by the prior of Icanno; but she derived comfort from the consideration of Bishop Grosteste's well-known character, and she could not bring herself to believe that that man would suffer a Hebrew to be treated ill in the fabric he governed. Leoni would have endeavoured to procure an interview with the bishop to ascertain whether Jocenus was or was not in the palace; but Judith hesitated to give him a mission that was so difficult and unpleasant, hoping that Lord Hugh would yet visit her, and accomplish this object for her, which *he* could do without inconvenience, and more effectually than any other person. Now was the time that, were he disposed, he could have served her, and have conferred on her another, and a more lasting obligation, in addition to that one, the remembrance of which she had always cherished. Her mind fastened on the hope of his assistance so tenaciously, and she so entirely felt convinced that nothing more

than his assistance was wanted to relieve the suspense she was enduring, that her wish to see Lord Hugh increased to agony, and when day after day passed, without bringing further intelligence of her father, she exhausted herself in imagining all sorts of schemes by which to procure a meeting with Lord Hugh. At one time she thought of venturing to Icanno, where she supposed he was, with his son, and of seeking information from the prior, and help from Lord Hugh; but the hazard of this design alarmed her as soon as it was brought to the bar of her judgment, and she gave it up; then she proposed to herself to send her servants, and long she pondered on the messages that might be entrusted to them; but by and bye this plan was decided against—although she knew not which way to look.

In this state of misery she remained, with no other friends but her attendants, except when Leoni waited upon her, until Caleb, who had been making persevering inquiries among the peasantry living in vassalage under the castle, among the persons who supplied the edifices of Lincoln with provisions, and among the street-rangers or musicians. A prolonged conference then took place in the saloon between the Hebrew Lady, Leoni, Caleb, and the servants of the house.

The smallest suggestion was heard with keen attention; and all seemed to make the topic of the hour a matter of personal sorrow and anxiety. The merchant, could he have looked in on the assembly, would have seen how much he was loved and honoured; how entirely his domestics were devoted to his service; and how evident it was that every one would have risked life, and all life could bestow to restore him to his house again. There was an emulation among the male servants which should propose himself as the executor of Caleb's plan, which was this;—that some one should in disguise, enter the courts of the castle, and endeavour to learn in what part of the fortress the mer-

chant was confined, how he was treated, and what were the earl of Lincoln's intentions regarding him. The castle was open to festive troops of masquers, dancers, and strollers, therefore a quick-witted fellow, said Caleb, might easily get in, and perform his real errand under cover of a fictitious one; Caleb truly expressed his fears that if he were to attempt the adventure, he should but mar it. The best disguise would be that which was least difficult to be supported;—and why not a Hebrew go in as a Hebrew? it was well known that there were wandering abroad Jewish mediciners, who were held in high repute among Christians. Judith thanked the servant for his suggestions, while she devised a project which she forebore to reveal.

'You have spoken well, Caleb,' said she. 'I am bound to remember the prudence as well as zeal, which you have evinced. But now let this matter rest until to-morrow. You can think of it; and weigh the dangers as well as the probable success of Caleb's scheme, before we decide.' Leoni wondered the decision was not made now, but seeing her full of thought, he said nothing on the point.

Judith prepared to leave the room, when she returned to Leoni, and said, 'Kind sir, you are aware that Lady Isabella is not in the palace—this, Caleb has informed us; she is on a visit at some distant mansion, he supposed. Well, if I determine to ride on horseback to obtain an interview with her at this mansion, I shall have to travel on roads insecure, and expose myself to peril of different kinds. I am about to try your friendship, Leoni—'

'Speak on, I pray you!' he cried, 'my pain is, that I am doing nothing for your happiness.'

She sighed; and continued, 'Well then, you shall be my companion in the journey, and take charge of me, and of the maiden of my bower, which maiden I think must be Keturah.—How say you girl?—how say you, Leoni?'

'I will not be afraid to go anywhere with you!' said Keturah.

'I need not speak,' said Leoni; 'you know my heart.'

'I do,' said Judith, 'and so hold yourself engaged my friend for this Israelitish adventure. I will give you notice of the time when your championship will be required.'

'Might I say, we should be speedy,' said Leoni; 'the sky is clear, and likely to remain so for a day or two longer; but if stormy weather sets in, our purpose will be retarded.'

'No, Leoni!' said Judith, 'neither wind, rain, nor thunder, should stay me from pursuing the path which would lead to the rescue of my father! Though storms raged, I would go on, looking above the elements of this world for the sunshine of heaven to cheer me.—Nothing so petty shall retard me.'

A virtuous heroism animated her as she spoke, and a nobler fire beamed from her eye. She was about to pass through the door-way when she said, 'To-morrow, Leoni, I should wish to see you; and then I will tell you more of my thoughts, and on the following morning, if you think fit, we will take horse.'

'I am ready at any hour to obey your commands,' said Leoni.

'Now Keturah,' cried Judith, 'I have something to say to you and to you only—follow me.' Having said this, she walked to her chamber; and securing the door, turned to the girl and speaking with energy said, 'Women are but cowards at the best, it is said, and women know the saying true; yet those same cowards, I have heard and read, have been courageous sometimes, where men have failed. I am going to test my courage, Keturah, and perhaps, yours too. Does that high spirit for which you have been famous, sink now?—Tell the truth!' Keturah had a great appetite for romance. Her bosom palpitated, and her answer was ready:—

'No, my dear lady. I should be sorry if it sank when it was most wanted. I have been so often told by Belaset and Caleb that my high spirit was a useless part of my character, that it would be delightful

to be able to show them, by example that it was as much intended for use when it was given me, as my hand or foot.'

'To be sure it was,' said Judith, 'and are you accountable for it; do not forget that. Keep thy foot and hand from evil, says the law of our fathers; and keep your high spirit from evil, is as much a part of it. But now you must keep *my* council;—you must be secret, and do as I bid you. We are going to the castle—'

'We, my lady!—*we* going!' exclaimed Keturah: 'what in disguise?'

'Yes, in disguise; and our first preparation must be to alter our countenances. You can speak Spanish; we have often talked in that language when you have been eloquent on the misfortunes of your family, and felt a little pride, so that you were not desirous that Belaset should hear your recitals—eh, Keturah?'

The maiden stood still, with a robe on her arm that Judith had placed there; her eyes fell to the floor, and so she remained while Judith moved one box after another that lay on her toilet; one was of alabaster, filled with precious unguents; another of silver, containing perfumes; another of pearl, in which were fine liquid essences; but she passed them over and drew towards her one of thin stone, finely marked, half the size of her hand, its compartments filled with brown and black Arabian dye. With the former she stained her face, forehead, and neck, so that they presented a Moorish complexion, of a dark tinge, with which the crimson of her cheek harmonised. Her silky eyebrows, a fine black, needed no heightening; and her hair was left to the hue which nature had given it. A yellow muslin turban, was then put on her head—and she turned to take the robe from Keturah—

'Why my poor girl! she exclaimed 'how melancholy you look since I spoke of your family misfortunes! Come, call back your cheerfulness!

I will be your friend as long as I live, Keturah! You know I love you! A shower of tears relieved the feelings of the girl. Judith caught the infection from her, drew Keturah to a seat, wiped her eyes, and soothed her with kind speeches.

'I beg your pardon,' sobbed Keturah; 'I always suffer very much when any one names my family.'

'I know you do,' said Judith; 'and I was thoughtless to forget that. I must ask you to forgive me, though it was an inexcusable fault on my part.'

'No fault at all of yours, my dear lady,' said Keturah: 'the fault was mine—pride is the cause of my tears. Everybody thinks me contented; but *you* can enter into my feelings. Ah, my lady! my parents were once wealthy!—Now, you know they are dependant on bounty!—no one cares about them! I know that I am very well provided for, since I am allowed to dwell with you; but I cannot forget my parents, nor cease to remember what they were once!'

'I wish I could remove the cause of your distress,' said Judith; 'but since that is impossible, I can only give you my sympathy. Loving my father, and the memory of my mother, so tenderly as I do, I can well feel for you; but still, Keturah,' she added, 'I know it must be very trying to bear a life of poverty, after having enjoyed a life of wealth; but yet your parents and sisters are happier in their present state than in the former; they are more united among themselves, and more humble, you have told me.'

'I know, indeed, they are,' said Keturah, 'yet, O Elias! how can I forget what they were once!'

Judith understood by this exclamation that her arguments made no impression, when set against the loss of wealth and distinction. However this might be, she had considered herself bound to behave to Keturah with consideration; and the maiden had repaid her by grateful affection.

'Now what think you! look I much like the daughter of the rich

Jocenus?' asked Judith, after concluding the arrangement of her disguise. 'Shall I be known?'

'Scarcely my master himself would know you,' said Keturah, walking round Judith. 'But, my dear lady, you have not prepared me for my part in the masque!'

'You will have nothing to do,' said Judith, 'but keep near me, call yourself my sister Estella, carry your harp and our medicine box, and whisper courage to me when you see me fearful.' She went on to say, 'As soon as I heard Caleb's scheme, I remembered that he had told me before, that the Earl of Lincoln's grandchild, a lame boy, his heir, was in a declining state of health, and that the earl had offered rewards to any leech who could be of service to him. Now, though bitter against the Jews, this earl has more than a common share of the notion that we possess medicinal secrets, the knowledge of which we never communicate to Christians, but which are of value. He has most confidence in the Jews that come from Spain, Arabia, and the other countries of the east, from whence we know most of the practitioners of medicine come. I am therefore a Moorish maiden, named Gabriella, a harp-player, and a Jewess, possessing her father's secrets of medicine—do you understand?'

'That I do, dear lady! and I will not shrink from going with you into any danger.'

'You think there is danger in the enterprise, then?'

'Very much,' said Keturah; 'not that I am afraid of it—the principal danger would be yours. You have lived shut up in this bower all your days; and when you mix, as we must, with the low crowds of strollers—I fear you—'

'What are the other dangers?' interrupted Judith; 'I am prepared for this one.'

'The earl is of so horrid a character,' continued Keturah, 'that you could not bear to hear his language, nor to remain five minutes in his presence.'

'For this I am prepared,'—said Judith:—'go on.'

'Then if you should succeed in entering the castle, and in becoming the mediciner of the lame boy—here are difficulties:—How will you cure him? and how will you get away from your charge, when you have learnt what you wish!—how will you be lodged in the castle?—and what will become of this house—and the merchandise—while you are absent?'—

'Prythee take breath!—Here is a list of barriers drawn out in array before me!' cried Judith: 'enough to daunt the craven heart of any woman—except of that one who seeks her father—and such a father. Can you have confidence enough to go with me, when I say I have no other answer to these objections than this—I have weighed them, and all my soul rises in eagerness to overcome them; which I will do, or perish in meeting them?'

'Let me go with you, my dear lady! I will not make the hazards more hazardous, by timidity,' said Keturah: 'if ever I had a spark of spirit it shall be roused now!'

'Come then—prepare yourself!' said Judith. 'Imitate my appearance, but vary it a little—use your invention. Come, the dial points to mid-day, and in an hour we must be gone. Collect a change of necessary articles of apparel for me and yourself, make one bundle of them, and fasten a leathern covering around them, such as wandering female minstrels are accustomed to use. Reach me your harp, and Belaset's, I will see if they are in tune, while you prepare: my own instrument is too rich for our object, I shall take Belaset's instead of it. Do not forget the coverings,' she added, as Keturah was passing out of the chamber. 'We must seem to have something to defend the instruments from the air, or we shall not be in character.'

The two harps were brought, and each string underwent an examination. The pegs were screwed to the requisite pitch, until every succession of harmonic distances was correct.

'Now shall we have need of all

the lays of foreign lands that our memories can supply,' said Judith; and she began to play a simple melody, and sang.

Rising quickly, she covered the instruments, and concealed a purse, filled with gold and silver coin, within her robe, saying to Keturah. 'let us steal down the staircase on the terrace side, and so pass through the garden, whose windings will prevent us being seen; but first let me leave a few lines for Caleb and Leoni, lest we excite alarm.' She penned the following note, which was left on her toilet:—

'The worthy Caleb will gratify his master's daughter, Judith, by keeping her absence as much concealed as possible. She is gone to no great distance, and may return to-day; though this is not to be relied upon. Keturah is with her, and they go with the hope of promoting the restoration of the merchant. Let no one be anxious on their account, though their stay should be prolonged. The house is left in Caleb's charge.'

'Leoni is kindly informed, that the journey to the Lady Isabella may be delayed, but he is requested not to fear that that delay will hinder the return of Jocenus, or endanger the release of Gesta.'

It was not long after this, that the Jewish heiress and her attendant, ascended the upper part of Lincoln-hill, on foot, and advanced to the watch-tower of the castle, standing beyond the ditch that washed the bulwarks of the outer walls.

Each bore her Jewish harp on the right arm, which was passed through its frame; and the weight was further sustained by a silver chain, which crossed the breast. One carried, in addition to her harp, a black ebony box; the other, a bundle of clothing, bound in a leathern wrapper. There was nothing remarkable in their appearance, when viewed as forming a part of the crowd among whom they moved, if we except the beauty of Judith, the elder professor of the minstrel art. She attracted many a look back from itinerants who had passed her, and

those who were behind, whispered, wondered, and admired. Occasionally the latter made haste to get up with her, and slackened their steps as if to examine minutely the face and figure which had so won them at a distance.

Judith was so occupied with hopes, apprehensions, and doubts, that she failed to observe the attention which her loveliness excited. Having never seen the castle but from a distance, she paused, when near the barbican, to scan the dark fortress. The moat, filled with water, surrounded the structure, and was crossed by a drawbridge, that was let down, and by which soldiers, masquers, and singers, were pouring in and out from the courts in a stream. Round towers frowned above the height of the walls, and between the battlements bowmen were seen, the sunbeams glancing on their caps and weapons, as they moved on the platforms at the top.

'And this,' thought Judith, 'is the terrible pile in which my father may be confined.' Her heart for the minute lost its courage; she felt ready to hasten to her home again, while she was yet free, for it seemed to her, that when the ponderous gates of the castle should close on her, freedom would cease, and from that hour she would be a prisoner. 'These towers rising above every angle of the wall,' said she to Keturah, 'do you observe them?—How fearful they look! without any convenience for the admission of light and air but slits, just wide enough for the passage of arrows from the cross-bow.'

'Gloomy indeed!' cried Keturah, 'they seem to hold nothing but penance-cells, such as I have heard these Nazarenes build for one another; or they are meant for worse purposes than that! perhaps they are for captives; O, Elias! who knows but my master himself may be in one of them.'

Judith was nerved again. Her father might be the inmate of one of those towers on which she gazed so tremblingly, and while she lingered, he was pining in suspense, and suffering she knew not what.

'Let us go on, Keturah,' she whispered, passing her arm through the frame of her harp that she had rested on a bank opposite the barbican: 'let us go on,' and inwardly she sought support from on high. They crossed the moat, and passed under the threatening machine suspended over the gates, called the port-culis, between two towers, in which dwelt the *corps de garde*. Over the gateway were rooms belonging to the porter of the castle, and when the harp-bearers entered the outer court, a second wall rose before them, not so lofty and strong as the outer walls, nor resting on bulwarks of soil, but still extremely high. The strength of every part of the fortress, and its prison-like air, chilled the hearts of the Jewesses as they walked between the outer and inner walls, still following in the direction pursued by other persons.

Observing that none were admitted within the second court but superior minstrels, Judith thought it best to try her powers; accordingly she stopped by the postern, and took the covering off from her instrument, then sitting on a heap of bombard-stones, she adjusted her harp, and commenced a legend of the Moors who battled against Charlemagne.

The persons who had noticed her beauty, gathered around her; she gave not one look to any of them, but rivetted her attention on the verses she was singing.

She had sung the half of the ballad when her voice gave way; and while every ear near her was listening with attention, and while every heart vibrated under the spell she produced, her head sank over her instrument, and she covered her face. These signs of deep feeling on the part of the foreign minstrel, drew tears from most of the standers by; they knew not what moved them so strangely, and they yielded to the gentle influence without inquiry. Not one stirred a step, but there was a general hush, as though the movements of the human affections, and of human griefs, were held sacred.

Most of the listeners were indivi-

duals bearing medals from different courts of minstrelsy; and when they saw so perfect and pathetic a singer displaying nothing of the kind, they were surprised; but perhaps they did not listen to her when she resumed her strain, with less attention, because she had apparently received no honours which could excite their envy or jealousy, but rather with more; and even the old venerable harper, who carried an established frame with him wherever he moved, and was welcomed every where, harkened to her, moved with her fire and tenderness, as a horse of the Arabian desert is moved, when he hears the trumpet of war.

She finished her lay, while Keturah wondered at the self-command which could carry her on from one division of the legend to another, with such rising power, though her mind was so harrassed and pained. Judith, however, only thought of the subject in view, and allowed herself, as much as the circumstances would permit, to be carried away with the ardour of the song, in order that that object might be gained. Nor was she disappointed. On lifting her eyes to the lofty terrace of the outer wall, she perceived a lady, whose head was covered with the close veil of a religious order, standing within the parapet, as it seemed, in the act of listening, and at the same time a page of the Lady Isabella appeared to receive directions from her immediately after which he removed to a turret containing a staircase, and having entered, presently appeared below in the court, and crossing it, made his way to the Moorish singer.

'The Lady Isabella Grosteste sends you this,' said he, putting into her hand two gold coins, of high value, which she thought it prudent to accept with a courteous movement to the liberal-minded donor. 'Your lay has pleased her much,' said the page; 'and you are to follow me to the terrace—she wishes to hear you nearer.'

Judith could scarcely credit her good fortune; to find the Lady Isabella here, and to be sent for to

her presence, was a success more than she could have dared to hope for. Surely, she thought, the Jehovah of her fathers was blessing her undertaking.

'Suffer my sister to go with me,' said she to the page. He hesitated, as if he knew not whether that would be agreeable to his lady, but at the earnest request of the minstrel, acceded. The supposed Moorish maiden then took up her harp, and pressing the hand of Estelle (or Keturah), went full of hope after the page to the turret. The narrow winding stairs were ascended, and they reached the level of the terrace that extended far before them, and overlooked the court. It was evenly paved, and broad. On the side next the court ran the parapet, breast high; on the outer side, the great exterior wall of the fortress, rose above the paving to about the parapet height, with tall battlements above, between which the high-born ladies attendant on the Lincoln prelate's noble sister, were enabled to obtain prospects of the surrounding country.

The lady herself sat by the parapet enjoying the temperate warmth of the sun, and the invigorating breezes, while she looked down into the area amused with the variety of characters that presented themselves there. The hoarse voices of the earl's military retainers sounded not unpleasingly from the various buildings composing the fortress: some of the archers, on the platforms at the summits of the towers with which the walls were flanked, sang, as they overlooked the artificers stringing their bow-shafts, and preparing their arrows; occasionally a long arrow whizzed aloft from an archer's hand, followed by the eyes of the ladies, who noted the extent of its flight, and waved their handkerchiefs applaudingly, if it went farther, steadier, or swifter, than was common. At a distant part of the court below, sometimes rumbled a heavy awkward bombard, or gigantic cannon, into the hugh mouth of which were rolled immense stones. The number of artillery-men sur-

rounding this clumsy piece of ordnance, was considerable; but they seemed merely trying experiments, and talking loudly on the merits and demerits of them. The second wall of the fortress was somewhat lower on the two sides of its square which faced the parapet where sat the Lady Isabella; and the terrace being lofty, she was able to overlook all the interior of the inner ballia, or the centre of the castle, as well as the court beyond.

The buildings composing the castle-centre, principally consisted of the garrison, a square erection filled with soldiers; attached to this were lodgings for artificers of different trades connected with the making of weapons of war; two erections over wells, dedicated to saints; and two chapels. Beyond these buildings about thirty soldiers were employed in repairing the bulwark of the outer wall, some bringing fresh earth in wooden machines, some heaping it up, and others finishing the process, according to the method of the day. About half the height of the wall, and perhaps more, was thus hidden from view by the artificial rising of the ground; but where the works had been laid comparatively bare, and were not yet filled up, the dimensions of the wall appeared indeed calculated to 'laugh a siege to scorn.'

But the main strength of the castle, after all, lay in its numerous towers, by means of which every approach to the outworks could be guarded and defended.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL the towers of Lincoln castle communicated with the great donjon tower, or keep, which contained the state rooms of the earl, not only by means of the terrace, but by a covered way, which descended and ascended with a surprising number of dark flights of stairs, and intricate passages, round the whole circuit of the walls.

The lady Isabella arose from her seat as the two female minstrels drew near to her, preceded by the

page. A deep and lowly curtsy from the one who had sung, was answered by the Lady Isabella with a grave, melancholy, but pleasing smile, accompanied by a movement of the head.

'Tell me your name,' said she, in a voice that bore the same character as her smile.

'Gabriella,' answered the individual addressed, looking down, and blushing through the brown dye, as her conscience gave certain indications of displeasure at the untruth she was telling. 'I am a jewess,' she continued, with much more mental satisfaction. The lady looked at her attentively, and then gave a more cursory attention to her companion. 'I am sorry,' said the Lady Isabella, in a voice still more grave, 'that you are an unbelieving maiden. This is your sister, my page informs me.' Gabriella curtsied again; she could not bring her lips to speak the words—'she is.' 'Her name?' asked the Lady Isabella. 'Estella,' said Keturah, quickly enough. The lady again surveyed them both, and her eye rested on the person of Estella longer than before. 'You are not much alike,' said she, as if half speaking to herself. 'Do you sing and play too?' she then asked of the latter. 'O yes,' replied Estella, without the smallest embarrassment. 'Let me hear you,' said the lady, sitting down, and motioning for her to uncover her harp. 'Gabriella, your sister, shall place herself near me while we hear one of your best lays, and my ladies shall be judges between you.'

Keturah was now the heroine of the scene, and she acquitted herself very well, for as soon as she had concluded a little piece of Spanish music, she received praises and rewards from all. Judith then was requested to repeat a part of the legend she had sung in the court, which she did with perhaps more than her former success.

'Do not be jealous if I say your sister excels,' said the Lady Isabella, speaking to Keturah.

'O lady, every one who has heard

her says that !' cried Keturah, perfectly gratified with the meed of applause she had gained. 'I only imitate her, and learned from her,' she added; 'she has taught me every note I know.'

'Indeed !' exclaimed the Lady Isabella; 'you are generous to speak thus of your sister; and Gabriella must have had a fine taste, a fine ear, and a remarkable facility of touch, imparted to her by nature, else, I think, she could not give us the minstrelsy she does, nor have, taught you so chaste and natural a style as you possess.' Then, bowing to them, as if satisfied with what she had heard and said, became engaged with more serious and melancholy thoughts, she turned away, walking slowly, and still looking into the court. Judith gazed after the lady as if every hope was vanishing from her heart: the tears of disappointment arose to her eyes, and she felt half determined to follow the receding figure, but that politeness and delicacy which characterized her, would not permit her to yield to this strong impulse. Overpowered by the sudden reverse of her expectations, she turned her head and wept abundantly, leaning against the parapet, her hand on the pavement by her knee, and her hand on the top.

But Keturah was not at this minute absorbed in the feelings which wrung the heart of the tender and devoted Judith; she was noticing a variety of persons, places, and things; all the present was replete with novelty; every object we have imperfectly described as belonging to the fortress; every sound rising on the breeze to the terrace, at this busy season of the day; every lady upon the terrace, and every individual below; excited the delighted attention of the handmaid. The swift succession of images which glanced across her brain, brought from her lips more than one repetition of her exclamation—'O Elias !' until she turned to her mistress, to receive a reciprocation of the pleasure she felt, when, perceiving Ju-

dith's attitude, she checked her lively flow of spirits, and resumed a look and air more consonant with the mission in which she was a sharer.

The Lady Isabella, having reached the farthest extremity of the terrace turned and walked back, with the same even pace, toward the spot where she had left the minstrel maidens. Two ladies from the castle had joined her, one moving on her right, the other on her left, their long trains sweeping the ground, and their head-dresses adorned with jewels, while their young pages, in lace and gold, followed a little in the rear, with the waiting-ladies, who smiled and talked with them.

Keturah came nearer to her mistress, and informed her that the lady was returning whom the latter wished to address on behalf of her father and Gesta, and that other company was with her. Judith instantly turned, and calling up her courage, determined not to lose this opportunity were it possible to be avoided. Circumstances again grew favourable; for when the advancing ladies had nearly reached her, they stopped, and the Lady Isabella beckoned the harpists to approach, which they did immediately.

'The minstrel I have been naming to you, Maud,' said she to one of the ladies, (both of whom were her relatives, and distantly related, also, to the earl of Lincoln, with whom they were now on a visit,) 'is this one Gabriella—suffer me to recommend her to your notice. She rivals, in some particulars, your much-boasted Maria, of France, if I am any judge of the gentle art.' So saying, the lady took the hand of Judith, and drew her nearer, not making any allusion to her beauty, although she had been speaking of it to her friends, and had brought them to make remarks upon it. The lady named Maud, had, like the Lady Isabella, long passed the age of youth, and, like her, possessed a soul truly pious, and liberal. Observing that Gabriella was confused

by their close observation of her figure and countenance, these two ladies regarded it as the indication of a modest mind, and, withdrawing their eyes, cheerfully requested her to sing a melody, while they exchanged looks that expressed their mutual wonder, to find such a being wandering from place to place with strolling companies made up of all characters.

'Let me have an air of France—sunny, beautiful France!'—said the Lady Maud; 'a vintage song—a vesper song!—any thing of France!'

Judith knew nothing of French melodies; and though her ease in composition was so great, that it was seldom she could not have improvised with success, yet now it was not practicable. To produce any work of art there is required a stillness of the soul, a calm possession of the imagination, which was now beyond her reach.

'I can sing lays of Spain, and Araby,' she said.

'No, no;—France—France!' cried the Lady Maud; 'where my ancestors fought and died.—You must sing me something of France!'

'Do you not see, Maud,' said the Lady Isabella, 'these are Moorish maidens; they are only familiar with the strains of their native land, and such—'

'Who is that I see below!' exclaimed the sister of the Lady Maud, aloud.—'The earl cannot surely have returned!—Yes—it is he! Shall we not go to the keep to meet him?'

The Lady Isabella looked steadfastly into the court, and saw that the prior of Icanno rode by the side of the earl, with several of the legate's principal friends, all of whom were enemies of her brother, the bishop.

They advanced by sound of the trumpet to the foot of the mound on which the great tower stood; there, having dismounted, they one by one ascended the steps cut in the earth, to the arched entrance above. She was much moved, and indignation was visible upon her face.

'Maud—Maud!' she said hurriedly to the lady by her side, 'I cannot stay here another day! The earl is the bishop's enemy; and now he has returned, it behoves the bishop's sister to depart from his castle with speed. Persuade me not—I am not to be moved from my resolution. See you yonder, who are they by the earl's side? are they not my brother's unprovoked injurers—those whose evil hearts yield nothing but animosity and injustice? I cannot remain where they are. I came here only for the sake of the poor countess;—I thought it was my Christian duty to visit her, whom the harshness of her husband was destroying, when she so earnestly petitioned for my society. I must now bid her farewell!'

'Tarry till the term of our visit here is expired,' entreated both the ladies; 'besides, you know the legate rules in the bishop's palace; why should you go in the midst of trouble that you cannot relieve, and of confusion that you cannot prevent? While you are in the countess' bower the bishop will be overcoming his difficulties, and your absence will rather assist him than otherwise.

'So he persuaded me,' said the Lady Isabella; 'and therefore I tore myself from his side.' She cast another glance at the keep, and resumed:—'Assuredly, in the countess' bower I have all outward tranquillity; I hear as little of the jarings of the great men with whom we are connected, as I wish to hear. But now the earl is here, I cannot stay—let it be decided.' A page from the noble she had last named brought a message for the two ladies to whom she was speaking; and, after a little conversation, that Judith did not hear, they separated from the Lady Isabella, who resumed her seat by the parapet. A few minutes were consumed in heavy sighs, while she passed her fingers over her beads, as if vainly endeavouring to relieve herself by the inward exercise of devotions.

Judith saw that neither the wait-

ing-ladies, nor the pages, were within hearing, and she addressed herself to her task, first examining the appearance of the Lady Isabella, as if endeavouring to glean from it something that might confirm either her hopes or her fears. The figure before her was thin, and short; the eye of taste saw nothing distinguishing in it, but the heart was keener-sighted; the heart of Judith quickly discerned about it the languor of grief, the wasting of disappointment, the weight of anxiety and fear; and she could not but indulge the belief that the woman who had endured, and was still enduring all this, would listen to her with some measure of sympathy, even if she did not espouse her cause. The features of Lady Isabella, also, promised success; they were plain, but benevolent and mild, and expressed, as Judith thought, a sympathy for the unfortunate, which she had made haste now to put to the proof, while she gave Keturah a signal to retire further back.

'Lady, I beseech your pity!' she cried, bending in a suppliant posture before her. The lady turned quickly, and Judith perceived that her eyes were red, and that traces of tears were on her cheeks. This encouraged the latter to plead with more unrestrained feeling; and while her own tears flowed swiftly, she made her surprised listener acquainted with the disappearance of her father, her knowledge that he was in this castle, and her fears of the prior of Icanno, and the earl of Lincoln.

'Then you are no Moorish maiden!' cried the Lady Isabella, in severe accents of displeasure. 'Your name is not Gabriella!—You are no professed musician!'

'I am not; I was born in this city, and here I have lived all my days,' answered Judith.

The lady rose:—'Maiden!' said she, 'I like no disguise! Let me tell you this—it is disguise makes the world what it is! Falsehood is disguised!—Truth is disguised! Every kind of evil springs from dis-

guises!—I like no such things! When you seek my counsel I will thank you to come in your real character, whatever that be, and then I will hear you, and, if I can, help you.'

'Thus am I reproved!' thought Judith; and in the deepest humility she stood silent. She was aware that the lady was remarkable for principles that might be considered austere; but the Jewess felt the greatest honour for such austerity, and so grateful to her soul was the exhibition of principle, under whatever form it was to be found, that she almost thanked her disguise which had procured her the privilege of hearing the lady's words.

'Madam,' she said, 'if you will deign to hear me—else I am most unfortunate!—else my errand here is perfectly in vain, and I may yield myself to despair!'

'Despair is not for the children of Providence,' said the lady; 'and yet—' here she suddenly broke off, and as suddenly recommenced—'it is difficult to preserve one's-self from it. I have a heart like your own, maiden; if yours is afflicted, so is mine; if yours is distressed for the safety of the one earthly being on whom nature teaches you to depend, so is mine; but my Counsellor, Friend, and Helper, is beyond. Seek a believing heart, young Hebrew maiden; put off disguises before heaven as well as before earth, and all shall yet be well.'

'I know that all will be well with me when I reach the land of the blessed,' said Judith, clasping her hands in unfeigned fervour. 'The God who cannot lie—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, tells me so in His written law—tells me so in my spirit—where I find the evidence of the truth of my hope. Lady, I believe what Jehovah hath been pleased to show me of his truth; and when He shines on my dark mind with new light, I hope I shall humbly welcome it.'

'I hope you will,' said the lady, relaxing into a kinder manner; 'and may He soon shine on you in the Sun of Righteousness—our Redeemer!'

Judith felt a slight reaction of feeling at the mention of the prophet whom the Jews rejected. She was silent, and the Lady Isabella understood what was passing in her mind. She kissed the cross which she wore, assumed a greater distance towards her petitioner, but yet drew from the maiden a full narration of her troubles, and undertook to assist her in obtaining the release of her father, if it should be found that he had committed no violation of the just laws of the country. Now the Jewess revived, and she expressed her thanks with the simple ardour of sincerity. But the lady was impatient of them; her heart was unable to endure praise for virtues which she every day practised, and of which she entertained the humblest opinion.

'Give God the honour,' said she; 'I seek mine from him only!'

Judith heard her with great respect. She longed to know more of her sentiments and principles; and felt as if she could have sat at her feet the whole day to be instructed. The Lady Isabella was sensible of the absence of a proud, dogged temper of the fair being before her, and it increased the interest she really felt on her behalf; she saw her aptness to learn, and was secretly a little conciliated by the deferential manner with which her words were received—a manner in which she could not think there was deception—in which she could discover nothing like servility.

These two excellent women, who, though in many respects of opposite characters, were yet so much alike in their moral elevation, in their devout sentiments, in the warmth of their affections, and in a large amount of taste and information, and who were equally in advance of the age to which they belonged—felt drawn towards each other as kindred souls, from the first moment of their acquaintance. The superior strength of mind of Lady Isabella, was balanced by Judith's peculiar refinement; the extensive experience of the former, was set

against the ideal vision of beauty and goodness of the latter; the solid thought of the one, weighed almost equally in an opposite scale with the lofty imaginations of the other. Thus, they were suited to imbibe a friendship for each other which should be of a durable kind.

Judith was taken into the bower of the countess of Lincoln, to that part now occupied by the lady Isabella, and there, though the reserve of the latter still continued in some degree, yet it was hardly perceptible during the conversation that took place between them. This room, like all the others in the fortress, was high, but confined, and imperfectly lighted; it had an aspect of gloom, which the dark tapestry of the walls did not tend to relieve; the floor was strewn with rushes, and, facing the seat which Judith occupied, was hung a conspicuous image of the Saviour on the cross, which frequently attracted the eye of the Jewess. The Lady Isabella observed her glances, but without appearing to do so; during this interview, she gradually put off the demeanour of a superior, to which her rank had insensibly accustomed her; and, finding that the wandering singer was in every sense a lady, paid her the outward respect due to one, while as her genius, knowledge, and amiability, began to shine through her conversation, Lady Isabella became more and more diffident, and rather sought to lure Judith on to produce more of the latent treasures of her soul, than to add to them by the display of her own.

A well-spent hour passed away on rapid wings, and Judith sang to the lady a Hebrew psalm. The words and the melody were appropriate, and carried forward their feelings on soaring pinions. Wounded, long-tried, undying affection, added its influences in the secret recesses of their hearts, imparting a luxurious pain, which was sweeter than joy. The truth, that the near and beloved relative, for which each was at this time so particularly concerned,

was still in the hands of the God in whom each relied, gave a more thrilling interest to their religious aspirations.

Keturah had reassumed her subordinate station, and waited upon her mistress at the table when refreshments were provided. Small wild fowl, on silver spits, and cups of wine, were handed to the Lady Maud and Lady Alice to the bishop's sister, and lastly to Judith, who, until the servants were dismissed, sat apart, lest suspicions should be excited. Lady Isabella informed her two friends that the minstrels present, were for a virtuous purpose in masquing attire; that instead of being sisters, one was merely a handmaid of the other; and that if it pleased all parties she should retain these maidens in the apartments she was occupying here, until she left the castle on the ensuing day.

This determination was most gratifying to Judith, and also to the ladies Maud and Alice; and the former, after the repast, prepared, with a beating heart, to see put in operation the means proposed by the Lady Isabella, for the discovery of her father. It was not long before the lady left the apartment to question the countess; she returned within half an hour, and Judith then learnt that her father was a prisoner in one of the cells of the keep, that the earl wished to keep this a secret from motives unknown, and that there was no charge whatever intended to be made openly against Jocenus, but that the seizure of his person was an act of private revenge on the part of the prior and the earl.

'I have taken some pains to acquire this information,' said the Lady Isabella, 'and have had almost to descend to arts of dissimulation, which I abhor; but the poor countess is so fearful of her husband that she hardly dare give a direct answer to any question in which he is concerned, though she is so much in awe of her better self, that she dare not do otherwise than assist in subverting the earl's oppressions,

when she can do so quietly and secretly.'

The Lady Isabella knew more than her feelings would allow her to impart to the suffering Judith; she fully believed that the prior was now in the castle with intentions against the merchant of the worst kind, and that unless the latter were released before another break of day, he would be beyond redress. This conviction increased her sympathy for Judith; and the oppressors of Jocenus being also the enemies of the bishop, she felt naturally, as well as morally, inclined to vindicate the cause of the Hebrew, which her strong sense of right finally determined her to do.

She left the ladies Maud and Alice listening to an Arabic poem, partly chaunted by Judith, partly sang in different voices by her and Keturah, the pauses imparting to the ear a pleasing suspense and expectation; the eloquent chaunt inspiring the imagination; and the rising and falling of the air, so wild and variable, yet so melodious, and correct, now lifting the feelings as on the wings of the wind, now melting them as in an indistinct dream. One look, expressive of gratitude, supplication, and anxiety, and only one, was Judith able to give the Lady Isabella, as the latter passed to the door on tip-toe, that she might not hinder the effect of the music; and that look was answered by one which comforted Judith, and invigorated her hopes; after having received it her harp was struck with more spirit, and her voice floated above its maze of notes with more equality and firmness of tone.

The Lady Isabella directly made her way to the keep, accompanied by her principal maid, and sent to the prior, desiring immediately to have an interview with him. He came, and they were left alone together, when a silence, protracted and embarrassing, became the prelude to a conversation of more than ordinary interest.

'Prior,' said the Lady Isabella,

'you are about to be preferred by the legate to the abbey of Crowland.' The prior bowed; and the lady continued, 'is it becoming in one of the pastors of the Lord's flock to prey upon the sheep and the lambs? Will not your Master call you to account for your stewardship? O, Prior Taylor! Prior Taylor! you have preyed upon the flock in your charge?—you are a false hireling, and not a shepherd.'

There was a little passion in her utterance, and her face was heated. The prior avoided meeting her eye, but looking down with affected humility, said, in low tones, slowly, and with point—

'Excellent Lady Isabella! I might perhaps say that you accuse me too harshly. But if your heart does not tell you so—I shall not.'

It was now the lady who looked down, and the prior gazed upon her, as if some unusual associations struggled within him, which artifice could hardly hide. She evidently trembled as she drew her veil more over her face, and her voice was hardly so clear as before, although quite as impatient, when she spoke next,

'Prior—prior—you deceive all but me! I have watched your progress to the height to which you are now about to be advanced in opposition to the bishop's will. I have watched every step of your way. I tell you it has been evil, and not good! You have raised yourself by trampling on the necks of others! You have served yourself, and forsaken God! But tell me, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? You have pandered to all the worst vices of the earl!—Why?—to gain lands and influence. He has accepted your civilities in order to purchase, through your instrumentality, at an easy rate, indulgencies from the duties of religion, and absolution for his enormities. Your compact with him cannot bear the eye of heaven upon it!—You know it cannot!'

She broke off, thinking he was

about to vindicate himself; but he merely smiled, and said, 'I have no remark to make, excellent Lady! until you have entirely concluded. Go on—I listen patiently.'

'There is a mystery in which you have been deeply concerned,' she continued. 'Shall I speak it?—The property of Lord Hugh—where is it? and what has become of his lady's confessor?'

'I will make my answer before the justiciary, if you please,' said the prior, with apparent dignity, 'when I am openly called upon for it. I will not be *entirely* subject to the caprices and humours of the Lady Isabella.'

'Ah! you shrink from my questions, Prior Taylor?' said the lady. She exclaimed with solemn emphasis, 'O man! how you have heaped up for yourself future sorrow! There is a day of retribution coming! You have thought,' she said, suffering her voice to sink almost to a whisper, 'that no eye observed your snake-like motions—your unholy designs! but they could not be hid from Isabella! Thirty years I have watched you; turn where you would my eyes have been on your track!'

'Indeed!' muttered the prior, bending his brow.

'Threaten me not,' said Lady Isabella: 'I defy all your machinations! At the worst, you can but kill the body—the soul is beyond your reach! Repent, prior—repent!' she cried, raising her voice: 'or I warn you that you will everlastingly perish!'

'This is too much!' said the prior, starting; 'if you have nothing of more import to say to me, Lady Isabella, I entreat you dismiss me, for I have important engagements that demand my attention elsewhere.'

'Shall I tell you what engagements? Foul conspiracies against a man more righteous than yourself!' cried the lady. 'And the destruction of an unoffending man—a Hebrew—whose wealth you covet, and whose daughter you would betray to the earl!—Have I touched you now!'

The prior clenched his hand, and, entirely thrown off his guard, muttered with alarming violence, 'No mortal being could have revealed this to you! But now I reflect—that hag Myrza is the woman!—Yes;—it is she who has informed you of my movements! Twice she has stood in my path—but she shall do so no more! Her doom is fixed!'

'Be under no mistake,' said the Lady Isabella; 'condemn not another innocent person to death—I only am the proper object of your wrath—of your vengeance!'

'Isabella can never be an object of my vengeance,' said the prior, with an appearance of strong emotion. 'She was once the dear object of my affection—the beacon of my wandering thoughts—the star which guided my soul on the stormy waters of this mortal life! and, when she was lost to me, say—was it a wonder that I struck on dangerous rocks, and that my faith and honour were shipwrecked?'

The lady entirely covered her face, but the shaking of her frame was perceptible to the prior; fearing that her excessive agitation would occasion illness, he drew toward her a small couch, and in accents of tenderness, entreated her to rest upon it. She complied with the invitation, for she could scarcely support herself in a standing posture, and dropping her head on the arm of the couch, remained motionless, while the prior paced the room with disordered steps. At length he came close to her, laying his hand on her head, while he called her softly by her name. The lady stood up, and giving her hand a quick, waving motion, cried, 'Stand back!—Go!—Come not near me!—Pollution is on your hand!—Queen of heaven, save me from this prior's horrible touch! A blackness gathered on the prior's face as he receded back from her a few steps, and he felt all at once a pang which no words could paint. The fearful aversion which Lady Isabella showed, struck to his heart, and informed him better than a

thousand reproaches could have done, the true nature of his present character.

There was again a silence, which was broken by the lady, who said, 'Prior, I have dared to tell you much that is true, but not all: you said that you would hear me patiently until I had entirely concluded—I request the fulfilment of that promise.'

'You may proceed—I will not interrupt you,' said the prior.

'You are my good brother's most dangerous enemy!' cried the lady; 'deadly as a scorpion, you seek to destroy his reputation, and to take from him his bishopric! You corresponded with the legate against him! You are now daily closeted with that legate, consulting by what means to injure him most effectually! You are about to receive the title of Abbot of Crowland, as the reward of your iniquitous doings! But rich and elevated as you will then be, the arm of retribution can reach you. Oh, reflect in time, Robert!' she entreated with earnestness. 'Think—think what it is to descend to the grave burdened with guilt such as yours!'

The prior was again disturbed, and especially as she went on—still with severity.

'I know you!—perhaps I am the only individual who can say so. I know you to be hypocritical!—malevolent!—covetous!—and cruel!'

'And is it you?' exclaimed the prior—'you, Isabella! who speaks thus to me? You, who have made me what I am! Look back, and ask yourself if you are not to blame for the evils I have done! When your brother, yourself, and I, were young, was I then the villain which disappointment has since made me? And O, Isabella! think what you were then! I see now before me a bitter, persecuting, prying woman!—without tenderness, without charity, or compassion! But then! Oh, you were a gentle spirit—too amiable for this rough earth!—Ah!—I can see you as you were!—That

withered form was then elastic and graceful; and though clad in a peasant's russet, *I* thought it more pleasing than a queen's! Your smile was most beautiful to me—it revealed your love—'

'No more—no more!—forget all the days of that time—name them not! let them be covered with oblivion!' cried the lady.

'I forget them!' exclaimed the prior;—'never! I dream sometimes of them, until I am melted into a very child; and your youthful figure and face flits between me and guilt, like a warning seraph.'

'Let it warn you, Robert, to some purpose,' said the lady. 'Forsake the ways of—'

'It is now my turn to speak—hear *me* therefore, patiently,' said the prior. 'In those days of which I have spoken, we loved each other;—but did you not deceive me?'

'No,' answered the lady; 'it was your own imperious, jealous temper which deceived you. You forsook me upon the bare, unfounded suspicion of my preference for another. You threw yourself into the monastery in which my brother was. You left me to a broken heart! Am I bitter—persecuting—prying? am I destitute of tenderness—charity—or compassion? My pillow could tell! it has been wetted with my tears year after year—night after night. My oratory could tell! I have prayed in it at all hours, unceasingly, for your temporal and eternal welfare. If I am bitter—it is to bring you to a sense of your perilous condition—to a sense of this truth, that one hour, while you are in your present course, may ruin your name in this world, and your soul in the next! If I persecute you—it is to save the helpless and the innocent from your persecutions! If I pry into your concerns—it is because I have such an interest in them, as no other being in the world can have!'

She stopped; and the prior said, 'Why should I disguise the cause of my hatred to the bishop, Isabella? From the time I entered the monas-

tory of Suffolk he and I contended for the prize of knowledge. We studied together in one cell—we advanced together from one degree of favour with our superior to another—when he left the house, I left it. Then a new race commenced. He struggled to rise from his obscure condition—so did I. For some time our paths ran parallel to each other. We pursued them with equal speed—but at length he outstripped me. I saw him climb one eminence after another before me, until he reached the pinnacle upon which he now stands. I hate him for his dignity—though I love him for himself! Robert Grosteste is still in my heart—but *Bishop* Grosteste I cannot endure! There, Lady Isabella, you have my confession—make what you will of it.'

He took a turn or two up and down the room, musing; then said, 'As to the confessor, you wrong me! I fear, indeed, he perished—I believe he did; but it was not by my hand—but by the hand of a Jew! a deformed nephew of the Hebrew, whom the earl, and not I, has imprisoned here. That wretched infidel I have secured—he is now lying in the town-gaol, and will, tomorrow, expiate his offence with the forfeiture of his own life.'

The lady threw back the monastic veil from her face:—'Another victim!' she cried. 'O thou man of crime! But know that I will prevent thee here! Either set that deformed youth free, or I will make an exposure of your deeds, which will sink you into nothing!'

'You dare not, Lady Isabella! great as is your power over me; and though you seem to hold my fate suspended, you dare not! your feelings will not suffer you.'

'No—you are right,' said the lady. 'Prior Taylor is safe from my accusations. And yet do not presume too far;—let that Jewish youth free, as well as his uncle. You know, and I know, the confessor did *not* perish by Jewish hands! The poison—'

'Hush, Lady Isabella!' exclaimed the prior; 'say no more—the Jews

shall be released; that is, if it depends on my will, which is not so absolute in this case as you think. The earl——

'Will give up the merchant,' cried the lady, 'if you set about the affair in earnest.'

'Which you cannot doubt I shall do,' returned the prior; and then pretending that a bell, which just began to ring in a chapel of the fortress, was a signal which he must obey, bade her adieu.

'Remember that I have heard you say the Jews shall be released, Prior Taylor,' said the lady.

'If it depends on my will, Lady Isabella,' said he.

'You are evading my question,' said the lady; 'answer me distinctly, as you value your own safety! Shall these two Hebrews be released—or shall they not?'

'I cannot tell,' said the prior. 'I am only a poor member of holy church. Perchance Garston, the gaol-keeper, may refuse to give up his prisoner—perhaps the earl of Lincoln may refuse to give up his!—and perhaps the excellent Lady Isabella will tell me how she would have me act in that case.'

'I would I could see into your heart now,' said the lady; 'there is something moving there which does not meet the eye. You have no intention to liberate these unjustly imprisoned men, on whose behalf I speak! You have designs upon their lives! for what intent you best know.'

'Since things appear in such very black colours to you, Lady Isabella,' said the prior, 'I am bound, though I had not now intended it, to inform you of what shortly the whole country round must be made acquainted with. This Hebrew merchant, Jocusus, is a foul destroyer, and he must not be let loose from this castle until the hangman takes charge of him! He has crucified the son of a celebrated Christian knight—at least his daughter has done so, and he participated in the crime.'

'Heaven and our Lady forbid!' exclaimed the Lady Isabella, raising

her arms in astonishment and horror. 'Jesu's mother forbid!'

'I myself saw the body thrown by the deformed nephew of the Jew into the well in the merchant's garden. Little Sir Hugh had gone thither, and I watched for his coming out, concealed among the trees, fearful that some harm would befall him. The deformed youth bore the body; the merchant was with him, and the merchant's daughter, the celebrated heiress, Judith, stood by, and spoke of the child's crucifixion as though it had been *her* work. When the three had returned to the house, I called near a monk of my monastery, and we drew up the body, with the assistance of the pulley placed over the well. The following day, having the corpse laid in a disused cell of the priory, I exhibited its bleeding limbs to Lord Hugh, the unfortunate parent of the sainted martyr.'

The Lady Isabella sat down, trembling, upon the couch, striking her hands together, and looking petrified at the dreadful tale.

'Lord Hugh was immoderately and dangerously inclined in favour of this merchant and his daughter,' continued the prior; 'but it may serve to prove the accuracy of my statements, if I inform you that he is now as well convinced as myself that they have wreaked the infernal malice of their Jewish hearts on his son, in mockery of the death of Jesus!'

'And that sweet boy is dead!' exclaimed the lady, elevating her hands. 'Dead! and has perished in so shocking a manner!'

'We have made his eminence, the legate, acquainted with the dire event,' said the prior: 'and to-morrow the body will be carried in solemn procession to the minster, there to be laid before the high altar and canonized. Your ladyship's presence at that time would well beseech your religious vows.'

'Doubtless I shall be there,' said the lady. 'But you say, prior, you acquainted the legate, and you insinuate that it is solely *he* who is to

conduct the canonization ;—are you not aware that there is a bishop ruling in Lincoln? that it is *his* church which you speak of, and that it is fit he have the first ordering of such a matter in this, his city. The legate is no more than a visitor in my brother's palace, and has no authority in this diocese while the bishop lives, unless the bishop be minded to will it otherwise.'

'Your brother is under arrest, excellent lady, I regret to say,' said the prior; 'he is confined in that part of the palace which contains his study. His authority is no longer acknowledged.'

'Nay—nay!' said the lady, rising suddenly, and extending her arm, her countenance speaking in a stronger language than her words. 'Bishop Grosteste is bishop still! His authority has friends on every hand who will support it! Let the legate shut doors on him, they cannot confine the influence of his previous life and character! that is abroad everywhere, and is trumpet-tongued in his cause! Men feel that it makes their hearts burn within them! They admire and love the man, therefore they will support his authority. Yes! thousands, prior, will, I am convinced, rally round their good spiritual teacher, and their benefactor, in his hours of need. Will not the poor, think you, uphold his authority?' she inquired: 'his—who has fed, clothed, and instructed them!'

'This is not to the point at present,' said the prior. But the lady was quick in speaking again, and he prevented himself from proceeding with what he was about to say, until she had concluded.

'There has been, methinks, much unnecessary secrecy concerning this dreadful affair of which you have told me,' said she. 'Pray, is the earl of Lincoln aware of the boy's martyrdom?'

'He is,' said the prior.

'Why, how is this? I have had conversations with his countess, but not a remote whisper from her of such a tragedy has reached me, or any other of the ladies in the castle.'

'You forget that the earl has but just returned from a journey.'

'Yes; but ill news usually flies fast,' said the lady: 'and I, the sister of him, who—scrupulous Prior Taylor—*was* at least, but last week, Lord Bishop of Lincoln, to receive no tidings of it! All the religious houses, too, in Lincoln, are yet ignorant of it.'

'All,' said the prior; 'but this evening they will receive notice to attend the procession to-morrow, in full mourning robes, with cross and banner. After the bier is deposited in the church, public orations will spread the knowledge of the deed from east to west—north to south.'

The lady was so accustomed to suspect every word that fell from the prior's lips—every design which emanated from him, that she could not forbear from weighing his words carefully, while her eyes were filled with a doubtful expression.

'By this means,' thought she, 'should there be anything wrong on the prior's part, the public eye will be dazzled and blinded, and no very deep search will be conducted in order to discover the truth, all parties being willing to believe they have already possessed themselves of it. The common orders will not venture to look into anything that their high spiritual fathers pronounce as verity. They will believe and bow, without troubling themselves with an unnecessary thought. It may be well that they will do so. The earls and barons will also take upon trust what the heads of the church assert—this may be well also; well for the prior, as well as for the catholic establishment. The monks will only echo their immediate personal superiors' opinions; their superiors will not question anything that may keep alive the passions of the multitude upon the side of the church, and so render her more powerful; and the legate and his peers will eagerly view, in idea, the vast increase of wealth which a new shrine will bring into their coffers from noble pilgrims, who will resort to it with rich offer-

ings—and there the matter will rest.'

Thus rapidly reflected Lady Isabella, who, though she would not acknowledge it to herself, was half a heretic in heart; that is one who saw farther and deeper than common—one who, obeying the dictate of the still small voice within, pursued a higher track of thought and knowledge, and a purer and simpler way of religion, than that which Rome dictated. She would have shuddered, perhaps, had she seen in words all the heretical thoughts which crowded on her mind at the present minute, and have considered them deserving of penance. But it is certain that she was conscious of scepticism as related to the prior's account of the boy's death; and under this feeling of suspicion, she asked him if he *alone* was a witness of the horrid guilt of the 'Jew's Daughter.' Her unwinking gaze, as she put the question, confused him in spite of all his wonted mastery over himself; but he answered—'I am the only witness.'

'But this monk who assisted you to raise the body out of the well—is he not a second witness?'

'Why he is—and he is not,' replied the prior, passing his hand over his face, and biting his under lip. 'He is dull of sight, and therefore did not distinctly see the wounds on the hands and feet of the child, but supposed him merely to have been drowned, which you will not be surprised at, considering those wounds were but small—the size of iron nails of ordinary make, which I afterwards drew out with my own hands from the flesh.'

The listener was excessively shocked with the spectacle that was here presented to her mind, and as the prior described other dreadful minutiae, she felt inclined to believe his statement wholly true; but, catching, unawares, a look of his countenance, as he purposely, but with seeming unconsciousness, turned from her, she was at once impressed with the conviction that some part of it, at least, was utterly

false, and that he was writhing inwardly under the dread of her penetration. She parted from him presently after, revolving in her mind a number of thoughts which she forthwith resolved to put into action—a number of inquiries, which she determined should be immediately satisfied; and wrapped in important meditations, she walked some time alone on the terrace, before going to Judith, whom she at first nobly determined to regard as innocent until proved to be guilty, and whom afterwards she looked upon as perfectly guiltless, notwithstanding there were many circumstantial evidences arrayed against her.

In the meantime the prior, with his chin sunk in his hand, and the hood of his cloak drawn over his head, thought, with a disturbed breast, on all the perils in which he was at present involved by his machinations. He was treading among pitfalls, and, although on the eve of openly assuming the dignity he had purchased with so much sacrifice of conscience, yet, before he could really enjoy it, he might be plunged headlong into destruction; yet, might one hour dash from his grasp the luscious cup he had so carefully prepared for himself, and present nothing to him in its stead but the worst dregs of bitterness.

Standing by the open window, but at first, little inclined to indulge in viewing the diversified prospect before him, he remained absorbed, until the vesper-bells rang over the field, lane, moor, and hill. The air was cool and pleasant, and he removed the hood just far enough back to admit it to play upon his forehead, where it was felt exquisitely refreshing to the heated temples. Groups of happy, innocent urchins, were gathered at play under the walls below the window; their laughter, their shouts, their merry voices, all were mingled pleasingly on the air, and the prior leant his head further out to hear them more distinctly; cattle were lowing on greens more distant, and the landrail made its grating, but

familiar cry, in the nearest hedges ; singing birds, in companies, loudly sang their orisons in the palace garden ; moths winged their flight past him, and soft vapours gave to the distant landscape, and to distant clouds fantastic appearances. The prior shut up the casement with a nervous hand.

'I am not fit to look on nature,' he muttered, as he walked across the floor of the room : 'I should be too weak to follow the leadings of my ambition were I to gaze long on such scenes as those.' Having reached the foot of a flight of dark steps, cut in the wall, he stopped ; and still speaking to himself with starts, and in unfinished sentences, said, 'No—*within* myself I am shut up. Some men are superior one way—some another. Some men throw out their thoughts and feelings on creation—I keep mine all pent up within myself ; they, are only fit to dream of other worlds—I make it my aim to subdue this to my purposes.'

He had descended a considerable way down to the subterranean dungeons under the keep, when he again stopped abruptly :—

'I have no heart,' he cried, 'for the tasks I have set myself ! Isabella has shaken me !—she holds me at bay ! But I am sensible that my only chance of ultimate safety is in the determined prosecution of the very sternest plans my mind had conceived ! Yes, all things concur to force me on this dread path ! I bend to the necessity ! I will make no pause until I have indeed set my foot, as Isabella said, on the necks of all who would impede my way to the *highest* church preferments—of all who would endanger my reputation—endanger, perhaps, my life !'

CHAPTER XVII.

ON the day following in front of the palace, was seen the earl of Lincoln mounted on his strong black horse. The baron was harnessed from head to foot, in black steel ; his long lance stood in its rest, upright ; while from the sides of his saddle hung a heavy battle-axe, and an

extremely long two-handed sword. Four confederated earls, of equal rank with himself, rode two on each side of him, also clad in full black mail. Each steed was completely accoutred as if for battle.

These warriors rode their horses slowly up and down before the gates of the palace, among a number of priests, in black weeds, on fine mules, covered with black housings. The priests had the banners and pennons of the monasteries they governed, carried before them with mourning appendages.

Inferior monks and friars, of different orders, crowded about on foot, among mechanics and soldiers, and expectation and anxiety were strained to an intense degree among them, no one of the general multitude being able to determine why they were called together, but all anticipating that the opening of the palace gates would explain the mystery. That signs of deep mourning should be commanded to appear so formally, was inexplicable to them ; for how could a distinguished burial take place to-day, they argued, when no demise in particular had been heard of ? And now swept the deep sound of the minster's passing bell over the scene of excitement, borne far away on the morning breeze ; the awful tones roused the people still more, and sensations of the keenest curiosity were felt on every hand. Some persons hazarded conjectures among their friends ; at one time supposing that the bishop might be dead—an idea answered by shakes of the head, and by half-suppressed exclamations, from which it might be gathered, that had such an event really happened, they would not have been forward to pronounce that it had been by the direct visitation of God. At another time, they enumerated the great lords that had so recently feasted in the grand hall, and judged that one of those might have been suddenly caught away from the scene of his earthly honours and enjoyments, and made ready for the impartial and gloomy grave—yet,

again, it seemed to them that the present preparations and the secrecy that had been employed, were hardly to be accounted for on *this* hypothesis.

Rumours were not wanting—and every one of them, however unlikely, passed swiftly as electric matter, from man to man. 'The prince is dead!' was for nearly half an hour the general report, originating no one knew how; and just as it had gained firm credence in the popular mind, and while hands and eyes were lifted up in all directions to his memory, a second cry was started, that it was not the prince but the legate himself who had been summoned into the everlasting world with such brief warning. This report was circulating with all the rapidity of the first, when the palace gates at length unclosed to their full width, and a flourish of trumpets announced the egress of the very dignitary whose interment the crowd were anxiously expecting to behold.

He was preceded by eight of his train, on horseback, in sable suits. His diminutive and decrepit figure was hid beneath the capacious folds of a sable mantle; the shaven crown of his head, with its meagre circlet of hair, mixed black and grey, was uncovered, and he held in his hand a plain gold cross, a quarter of a yard in length, which he occasionally elevated over the heads of the people nearest to him, repeating brief Latin exordiums and benedictions. Those of the inferior people who were fortunate enough to get at all near him, threw themselves down on their knees in the middle of the street, disdaining to exercise the slightest caution as to the state of the soil, but quite blest in their zeal if they were but able to kiss the crucifix which the legate held. When he and his train rode half way down the hill, he stopped, and the second flourish of trumpets recalled the attention of the people to the palace, from whence it had been withdrawn for a brief space.

The man who had hitherto been

known, and, we may add, feared and hated, as the prior of Icanno, now presented himself to the wondering gaze of the public, as the abbot of Crowland. He was elevated on a shining black courser, of great worth, which he reined in to the slow pace required on this occasion, with all the skill of the most expert horseman.

The abbot was certainly bare headed like all the other churchmen that had issued, or were still issuing, from the palace; but he took care that his appearance was not rendered by this means less imposing. His mitre, studded with the most precious jewels, was carried before him by one page, and his pastoral crook, or crosier encrusted with the same, was borne by another. As he went along he also lowered to the people, as though possessed of superior sanctity, the much abused sign of the meek and lowly Jesus, of him who had lived on earth in the deepest poverty, and who had taught his followers to despise worldly possessions and honours. But the abbot's cross was no appendage of lowliness, it sparkled with diamonds and emeralds, set in the sockets, wreathed as it were around the gold, and those who saluted it, declared afterwards to their associates, that the pope himself could not have exhibited a more dazzling article of worship. His fingers glittered with gems, and on his forefinger a large signet ring of his new dignity, shone conspicuously.

The straps of his horse were of white bossed velvet, and the foot-cloth, reaching to the ground, of white damask, wrought with black at the corners. The robes of the rider were of black velvet, embroidered with white silk, disposed in effective contrast. His person had never appeared to greater advantage; he sat in the saddle with an air of ease and nobleness, and yielded to the peculiarly graceful and springy motions of his horse, as if accustomed to them from his cradle. He held his head erect, and flashes of exultation and joy fre-

quently broke over his features, dispersing every gloomy shade. The prior and sub-prior of Crowland rode by his side; their white bridles hung with very small silver bells.

After the new abbot, and the friends that prosperity had drawn around him, were a little advanced, there appeared coming out of the palace, a small, but rich black bier, with canopy and pall, hung between two small horses. But the wonder that was stirred among the beholders may be imagined, when it was perceived to be empty—the sides were so left open that all might see within, but no corpse was there. Priests, with censers in their hands, were mounted on each side of the bier, and a chief justice followed after it, with a train of officers, all alike attired in black velvet gowns. After these, came ladies on palfreys, with mourning veils flowing down to their feet; and after them, the earl of Lincoln and his friends. In this order the procession moved on slowly, in grave silence, to the foot of the town, where, having passed through the city gate, it turned off to the long green lane that conducted to the priory of Icanno. The brethren of this little monastery were collected together in the chapel, to the entrance of which the bier was brought, and was received there by a monk, who at present officiated as superior, until a successor of the prior should be elected.

The remains of the young Sir Hugh were lying before the humble altar, his father kneeling at the head, and from this peaceful place of rest they were now to be removed. The bier was taken down from between the horses which had borne it hither, and brought to the altar, where it received its pale unconscious burden. As soon as this was done the brethren commenced singing a solemn dirge. No organ's tones rolled sublimely through the building, but the ear was satisfied with the unaided sweetness of the vocal strains, and not a heart present but was deeply affected. The confined dimensions of the chapel

were now filled with persons, the bier being in the midst: many a manly eye dropped tears at beholding the grief of Lord Hugh, who kept his gaze fastened on the face of his lifeless boy, while his sighs were loud and heartrending.

The bier, at the conclusion of the dirge, was borne out to the door by clergy; the legate and the abbot of Crowland supporting the pall with the utmost seeming awe and reverence. It was here raised again between the two horses, and the procession then proceeded on its way back to the city.

The Monks-lane (as it is still called), was at that time bordered on each side with dense, overhanging thickets, the resort of lawless men, whose whistle was heard at mid-day, threatening the ear of the lonely traveller. Foul deeds of robbery and violence had this lane witnessed, as all the individuals of the procession knew full well, and many a timid glance from the ladies, and many a curious one from the churchmen and lords, were cast on either hand, as their horses passed with difficulty over the unequal ground. The bier had reached the middle of the lane, and the legate and the abbot were by it, when a strange figure was seen sitting under a blasted oak by the wayside. It arose suddenly, and with wild looks singled out the late prior of Icanno, before whom it stepped, brandishing a mistletoe branch.

'Where is my son?—Where is my son?' she cried in unearthly tones, which thrilled all persons near. The abbot's spirited horse, startled by the sudden appearance of the object, ran aside, and reared itself upon its hind legs.

'Away, foul witch!—away!' exclaimed the abbot, vexed with passion, at the presence of so unwelcome a being at such an hour.

'No!' cried Myrza, (for it was she,) 'I must know where my son is! You have had a mother—Oh think of her!—and tell me what you have done with my son!'

'The hag is mad!' said the abbot.

'I know nothing of her son—I never knew she had a child.'

'I am not mad!' said she, with a plaintive expression of voice. 'Yesterday I knew not I had a child. Good priests, stop!—I will not keep you long! But I must know what this black-minded prior has done with my son! Good legate,' (she knelt down) 'hear me!—Oh, hear me!'

'What wretch is this?' said the legate, in a tremor. 'Here, officers, approach—remove her.'

'My lord cardinal,' said the abbot, 'she is a noted witch—an infamous woman—I assure you. The very air she breathes is infected with her magic. She had better be put into confinement.'

'O to be sure—to be sure,' said the legate, 'confine her by all means;—I am not myself while such a frightful looking creature is before me.'

Myrza was seized roughly by two of the inferior officers, who had dismounted, and had come forward from the rear of the procession, which was stopped by this interruption; but she made a desperate effort to free herself from their hold, and succeeded, more by the energy of her passion than by the strength of her body. In the struggle she received several severe bruises, and blood flowed from her lungs to her mouth, dyeing her face, and increasing the ghastliness of her appearance. As she now stood free beneath the blasted oak, where she had been previously sitting, she threw up her bare, emaciated arms into the air, and gave a piercing cry—a long wailing howl of agony and despair.

Lord Hugh, who had been following next the bier, turned his horse at once to the hedge-side, and spurring forward to the witch, reined in close by her. He was the very last person whom the abbot desired to see speaking with her.

'Ha—I must prevent a conference there, at all hazards,' muttered the latter, and making his horse bound across the path, he raised his

voice with authority—'My Lord Hugh, I beseech you—I command you—to draw back. That fiend will destroy you, as she destroyed your child! It was she who blasted him with her curse, and brought upon him a premature and a horrible death! There is destruction in her look and in her voice! My lord, back your horse!'

'I am not fearful, I thank you, prior—I mean lord abbot. I wear invisible armour against invisible weapons. This woman moves me. I carry about me a parent's woe—I can bewail a son. What was his name, woman, whom you have lost?'

'Gesta,' she answered: 'he was deformed—known as a Jew—but he had been stolen from me when he could scarcely go alone; and now the woman who took him from me comes to tell me he is living with the Jews, and is called the rich merchant's nephew. I go to the merchant's house—I ask for the child I had nursed on my knees, and suckled—and they tell me the prior of Icanno has sent the gaol-keeper to take him away;—I go to the gaol, and they say they know of no such person as Gesta—and now I ask where he is of the prior?' (she raised her voice). 'Tell me—tell me—where you have shut him up? Perhaps he wants air, light, bread, meat, wine! He shall have them all—all—if I spend my heart's blood for them! I have been starved with hunger—for the prior gave orders to people to deny me everything! But my darling!—my child!—he shall not want! Oh, tell me—tell me—where is my child?' and again she fell upon her knees.

'This is a strange story which she tells,' said Lord Hugh, 'but I think it true. Her mind is perhaps just now as sound as mine—she is a sufferer for her son's sake. And O, Holy Virgin! I am a sufferer for my son!' He turned his eyes, full of grief, toward the bier; then requested the abbot to satisfy the woman's mind, and to leave her unshackled.

'It would distress your lordship

needlessly,' said the abbot, 'if I were to speak the cause of this Gesta's confinement, and his present situation. Yet will I do so, if you wish.'

'I do,' said Lord Hugh.

'Then he is charged with the murder of your departed lady's confessor; and awaits, in the lowest cells of the town-gaol, the doom affixed by justice to his crime—which will be executed before the next midnight-moon rises over this lane.'

'Ah! spirits of the earth and deep, hear, hear! Ah! all ye spirits of the air—merciful spirits!—hear this!' wildly exclaimed Myrza, spreading out her arms, and tossing her tangled red hair upon the wind. 'My son is to die to-night!—the son I have agonized for!—him that I have longed to see, and to clasp in my arms! He is to die to-night! I shall not call him my child—he will not call me mother! I shall rave to the night still—still alone! He will never love me! He will never know that he is mine! I shall never look on him again—never—never!'

A second howl of lamentation arose from her lips. Those who were in the fore part of the procession turned themselves in their saddles, and pressed back to see the being who had given vent to it, and those who were behind crowded forwards. All were aghast, and the order of their advance was broken. The ladies were too fearful at the present moment to move nearer to the strange woman, excepting two of them, who, completely hid in their long crape veils, ventured about twenty paces forward.

'Tis the very Myrza I told you of last night,' whispered one of the two to the other, whose remarkable figure the full black drapery could not entirely conceal. The latter made a gentle obeisance in acknowledgment of the remark, and held her veil aside from her countenance for a moment to look, not at the witch, but at Lord Hugh and the bier. A deep sigh succeeded, she let her veil drop, and, touching her slender Spanish palfrey lightly with

her whip, was in another second of time close by the bier. The procession began to move on again, but she took advantage of the temporary confusion around her to lean from her saddle, and take a fond, melancholy, farewell look of the corpse; then turning round the docile palfrey, quickly rejoined the senior lady, her companion, who presently observing her, said, in tones so low as none could hear, 'Judith, you are weeping; you have seen the man who is plotting your destruction, and the destruction of your father—the sight of him makes you suffer. Is it not so?'

'Ah, no, Lady Isabella,' murmured the other, in tones as subdued, but more musical: 'I did not think of him: I looked at the little angel in the bier. How bright his complexion!—how smiling his lip!—and how beautifully white his neck and arms! O lovely boy! The last time I saw him he was animated, and full of health! He is gone! I have snatched my last look of him!' She wept so much that the other said, 'I beseech you, my dear, refrain if possible, lest some persons look at you too curiously. You were wrong to go so near the prior—I shall never call him abbot—are you sure he did not observe you?'

'I did not once look at him,' replied Judith (the Jewess, now in a second disguise), 'therefore I cannot tell.'

'And the boy—did you observe nothing in particular about his little hands and feet?' Here the querist looked narrowly at the other, who, unconscious that anything important was meant to be conveyed by the question, raised her veil, and meeting the eye of the senior lady, replied with a glance of sincerity that was not to be doubted, 'No—I observed nothing; indeed they were covered with the pall, which was drawn half way up his dear body. There was a white satin pillow, set with silver lace, under his head,' she added, 'and his shroud was of fine white silk, embroidered on the breast with the arms of his house. I

saw his little bugle and chain, just worn, kindest lady, as when he was alive. Oh, believe me, I longed to kiss his forehead—his cheeks—his lips! I longed to say to him, my darling, darling Hugh! it is Judith calls you! Judith, whose carelessness cost you your life! Judith, who will lament you to the last moment of her existence! Look up—look up—sweet cherub, and speak to me once more! She buried her face in her veil, and wept with tender melancholy, while her palfrey followed the onward movement of the cavalcade, at a slower pace, so that presently the two ladies were left in the rear, and conversed freely, letting their bridles hang loose. When they approached Myrza, the Lady Isabella, who had not been inattentive to her cries and words, stopped; and after making the sign of the cross, to secure herself against the risk of witchcraft, would have addressed her, but, on looking closely at her, perceived she was insensible.

At the instant the abbot had spoken so daringly, and it may appear without his wonted caution, the witch, smit with despair, knowing the power and malevolence of the abbot, uttered those exclamations of distracted grief which we have heard. Instantly she was about to proclaim aloud, with all that wild vehemence which was natural to her, certain incidents which were connected with the confessor's death (by which her son might have been cleared from the accusation against him), when one of those fits of swooning, to which, in her present state of bodily decay she was extremely subject, caused her words to die off on her tongue, and her eyes to become glazed as in death; she sank down in a sitting posture, deprived at that critical moment of consciousness. She had drawn her red mantle over her head, and it was not perceived she had fainted. The abbot had urged forward the cavalcade at the precise moment of danger, immediately after he had spoken, and, secure and

proud, he rode on to the city, the favourite of fortune, certainly wondering at his narrow escape, as a man who had performed some dangerous feat, and finds himself unexpectedly safe.

'She must have given up her son for lost because he was in *my* power,' said he, mentally, 'or she would have at once put me to the hazard by naming those particulars with which she is acquainted. But this woman knows my resoluteness; she had in her power the means of abasing me, yet, at the moment when nature would have stirred her against me, she forgot vengeance in the spontaneous conviction, that, whom I had destined to be my victim could not escape me. Yes; she knows what I am—by instinct she knows it. She was right. A thousand such retorts as she could have given me, would not have saved her son! It is near noon; at that hour he will be lopped from my path like a crooked branch that impedes my progress. Garston is even *now* preparing for his work. What is a life? Tush! the old philosophers dreamt of an imperishable soul. The church holds up the doctrine as a scarecrow to fright the birds from the corn it enjoys. I am not to be so deceived. The life of my roan courser is of more worth to me than the life of a man. They must both go down to the dust alike, but while they exist, my horse is to me the most useful animal. This duped Lord Hugh—yet,' he muttered, with a sudden recoil of fear, 'I am not so sure he is fully duped. When I told him it had been the curse of the witch which had worked ill to his urchin, would he have been inclined to sympathise with her so immediately, if he had not had some secret misgiving in his mind that I have a tendency to falsehood? He would not even allow that she was partially insane! a mad doubt I should say, of my Lord Hugh's, were it not, I look deeper into the impulses that prompt him to assert so foolish a thing. He has not any very sterling confidence in me—no—though he

has empowered me to bring to judgment and death the Jew Jocenus, and his daughter. He suffers much in the thoughts of their doom, and the expectation of it, wrings his breast with pangs not to be envied. He has loved the merchant and his heiress—he loves not me. He is reserved with me; and though he cannot deny my statement of the child's crucifixion, and of course now believes it with due reverence for the martyr, like all the other fools around me, yet, at the bottom of his heart, he abhors me for being the medium of such a dreadful discovery. Because the witch complained against me, my Lord Hugh must sympathise with her; she must not be shackled either, said he; very well—she shall not be shackled, sir knight. But if she live to mourn her son another day—I am no abbot!

The pride of gratified ambition had already hardened him thus far: he almost felt as if omnipotent. No qualm of conscience now troubled him; if the apprehension of a discovery of his deeds crossed his mind, he quickly chased it away. He looked at all he had accomplished, all he meant yet to accomplish, with a steady gaze, and defied the dangers which threatened him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JUDITH, and the Lady Isabella, dismounted; and, raising the head of the wretched woman, endeavoured to restore her. They had neither of them any restoratives about them, but they chafed her hands, and brought a little water, from a limpid spring at hand, in a horn which they found by its side, where it had been placed by the hand of a kindly monk for the use of the necessitous. After sprinkling this on her face, they had the satisfaction to hear her breathe, but the effort seemed too much for her, and she relapsed again into a swoon.

'What shall we do with the poor creature?' said Judith, looking distressed.

'That I know not,' said the Lady

Isabella; 'we cannot leave her to perish.'

The hermit of the Swan-pools was seen approaching on foot; he had a long white beard, a rosary, a staff, and stooped greatly.

'I will see if I can do her good, if you please, ladies,' said he, and drew from his wallet a phial, and a small silver cup; into the latter he dropped a little liquid from the bottle, and, going to the spring, added about the same quantity of water. He first revived her by the application of a medicated powder, to her nose, and then prevented her from sinking back into a state of torpor, by inducing her to swallow the liquid in the cup.

Having quite recovered the use of her senses she stood up, and looked on the two ladies and the hermit, striving to recall to her memory past circumstances. She groaned frequently while thus employed, partly from bodily pain, and partly from anguish of mind. The ladies remounted, but remained by her some minutes longer, until all signs of the procession had disappeared, excepting the deep hoof-marks in the soil; and until all signs had passed, except the quiet rustling of leaves, and twitter of birds, the bubbling of the spring over pebbles, and the croaking of the toad in the green water at the bottom of the wild hedges. Judith looked around her, and listened with varied feelings.

This was the Monks-lane, of which the boy whom she had loved so fondly, who was now in his bier a little before her, had so often spoken. His mysterious death, she imagined, occurred in this lane. How there was no one to explain. Lady Isabella had told her that Lord Hugh had found the child dead, on a night, the same as that on which Keturah had omitted to send Caleb with Sir Hugh. A little mistaking Lady Isabella's meaning, Judith supposed that it had been in the Monk's-lane the boy had been found dead by his father, therefore she could not be otherwise than deeply affected.

A timid rabbit darted along under the trees, and a squirrel leaped from branch to branch above. Judith viewed them with a passing smile, then, dropping her eyes, saw with equal pleasure the glossy black snail by her horse's foot, and the minute and beautiful ladybird, scarlet and black, which had dropped on her bridle.

The hermit, as soon as Myrza understood what was said, affirmed to her, in a whisper, that he had been in search of her, and entreated her to go with all the haste she could to his cell, by the river, to enter in, and wait for his return.

'No,' said Myrza, 'I will go to the prior—he must give me my son from prison—I have not long to—live.'

'Do you think,' said the hermit, 'that the abbot will be so foolish as to give him up? Heard you not the abbot's accusation against him, spoken out so boldly (that the person who had doubted the abbot in the matter of the confessor's death, might not doubt him more)? You gave him no answer. You did not tell him that it was he himself who ought to die for the crime.'

These are strange words, hermit,' said Lady Isabella, who had heard his last speech. 'You put yourself in peril by slandering the lord abbot.'

'He has put me in peril, my lady before to-day,' said the hermit, 'and, with all humility I must say—I slander no one.'

'How has he put you in peril?' inquired the lady.

The hermit made no answer. She repeated the question, and he replied, 'Lady, that shall be known hereafter.'

She observed him with peculiar attention. 'Are you not the writer of the anonymous billets I have received?'

'Yes I am,' he replied.

'Then I should wish to have some private talk with you, good father. Will you come to the palace this afternoon, an hour before vespers?'

'No, lady, I seldom go out of my

hermitage. I have been sent for to the priory of Icano frequently, but I have told the prior I had a vow which prevented me from entering beneath any roof except my own. So I am bound to tell you.'

'Then I will ride to the hermitage. At what hour shall I least disturb your devotions?'

'My lady I will send to inform you. My vow, in part, extends to the admission of persons into my own domicile.'

'Very well, I shall wait with impatience your summons. Your billets were very important.'

'I can disclose a great deal more to you, lady,' said the hermit.

'That I must believe,' said Lady Isabella.

The hermit stooped to Myrza, who sat silent in abstract despair, and again whispered, 'Say not a word that may divulge the secret, since you missed so excellent an opportunity; there is no chance of your being heard in time to save your son by means of your explanations, and if you had been heard already, Gesta would not be freed; the abbot knows too much depends on his death to set him at liberty. You must be silent woman, until a fitting hour, which I will tell you of.'

'Who art thou,' said Myrza, 'who carest for my son? Can you bring him out of prison, and place him by my side? Else, why talk to me? Twenty confessors may die by the prior's hand—the prior may be pope—all the world may worship him, as the snakes worship Hela—What is it to me?'

'Go,' whispered the hermit, 'where I have told you, obstinate woman, or you will mar all! Before night, I hope to bring your son to you, alive and free. But breathe not a word, or he dies! Go; and speak to no one from the moment of leaving me, until you see me again. Away! the moments are precious.'

Myrza falling upon her knees by his side, thanked him, almost frantic with renewed hope, while the hermit appeared uneasy. As she moved

down the lane before him, with as much quickness of foot as her impaired strength would permit, he walked beside the palfrey of the Lady Isabella, which resumed its slow pace forward, accompanied by Judith.

'The woman was full of gratitude to you,' said the Lady Isabella, with an inquiring meaning in her eye. 'Had you been whispering to her hopes of her son's release?'

'Hopes, indeed, my lady,' said the hermit, avoiding a direct answer. 'What else but hopes could any one give her! Who could with any certainty say the young man will not die to-day? And yet, who has examined into the abbot's statement against him? And what impartial justice has pronounced him worthy of death? Who has made the lawful warrant for his execution? The abbot's influence is of unknown extent and power,' he continued; 'the gaols are under his control—justice is laid down and taken up at his pleasure. His sudden elevation to-day, which surprises all Lincoln, does not surprise me. He has accomplished it with perfect secrecy, in despite of a thousand dangers—and by what means he only knows. May not any one perceive that he has the ear and heart of the legate in his own keeping? As for the child to be canonised to-day,' the hermit's voice trembled, 'he visited me two or three times a week, lady; I was attached to him; for though I am a grave old man, I love to look on the gambols of a little innocent creature such as he was, it is given out, my lady, since the cavalcade started, that he died by the hands of the Jews: already the sound of that report has spread like wildfire among the populace. I fear we shortly shall have repeated in Lincoln the frightful outrages that have lately taken place in York. Not less than five thousand of the Jewish people have there been massacred! Heretics as they are, my lady, we cannot rejoice in such deeds.'

Judith, it will be readily supposed listened with a sickly and indescribable terror.

The Lady Isabella said, 'Rejoice, no, indeed, not I! Such events are terrible to be contemplated! Nor do I pity the victims alone. Queen of heaven! how far must the heart of man be gone from its original glory, when it can be the nursery of vindictive passions capable of producing such results! Unfortunate heretics! Unfortunate Christians! Both so little enlightened by nature and grace! How did it occur, hermit?'

'My lady,' the five thousand were allowed to throw themselves into York castle when the outcry against them was at its height; the furious people surrounded the castle, and when the Jews were perishing by famine, and saw no way of escape, the boldest killed themselves and their families, and the survivors, throwing the bodies over the ramparts, entreated for mercy;—the rest is too dreadful, lady, for my tongue to utter.

'Pray go on,' said the lady, and held out her hand to Judith, as it were giving the Jewess assurance against the fears which were too plainly visible on her face, from which the veil was half withdrawn.

'Then, lady,' said the hermit, 'when the famishing and trembling Jews, with their wives and children, about three thousand in the whole, petitioned in such a heartrending manner for mercy, showing the mutilated corpses of their brethren, the Christians pretended to relent; and the Jewish sufferers trusting in their word, came forth, all of them, leading their little ones by the hands, some of them bearing their infants on their bosoms, but no sooner had the last of the number left the gates than all were slaughtered without mercy.'

'Cruel, ignorant men! Miserable victims!' exclaimed the Lady Isabella, while Judith's colourless lip showed what she endured on hearing of a barbarity so great. 'Truly it is painful to see the Prince of

Peace so little understood by those called after his name! The people know not what manner of spirit they are of! How do you account for it, hermit?

'Who, lady,' said the hermit, 'can account for the bloodthirsty passions of men? Lucifer was a murderer from the beginning. But I must say the church itself is greatly answerable for these deeds, allowing the guilty to purchase relief of conscience too freely with money, to their souls hurt; and too much imitating the Saracens in the principle she disseminates, by encouraging men to draw the sword for religion, and to convince their opponents by means of it, or to slay them. Martial courage, my lady, inspired by enthusiasm, may be a very imposing sight, when arrayed on the side of the cross, but the principle here set in operation, produces dreadful acts—irreligious—hideous to angels and to God. Ought not Christians to shrink from sending men unblest by a believing heart into purgatory, perhaps into perdition? 'Cursed be he who keepeth back his sword from blood,' is, I have heard Crusaders say, the cry of many an infidel Moslem in the field of war, which cry is taken from the Koran, the bible of their lying prophet; but we should prove the divinity of our religion, lady, by a nobler cry, Blessed, blessed be he who keepeth back his sword from blood! So shall we anticipate the time of which God speaks by the prophets, when men 'shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; when 'nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' Then followed from the hermit's lips a string of Latin quotations, which were perfectly understood by Lady Isabella, who considered them quite pertinent to the argument, and altogether conclusive against the nourishment of a warlike spirit in religion, unless, she said, with caution, the pope and the prelates ordered otherwise; a reservation in

which the hermit, with the most profound assent, joined. They continued to converse until the end of the lane was reached, when the voices of a confused and angry multitude were heard indistinctly. Every mansion and hut, Norman and Saxon, in and about Lincoln, had poured out their inhabitants into the streets, and the whole mass of the population, with thousands of strangers who had been attracted hither by the festival, were pressing up to the minster, after the cavalcade. Knights were spurring up and down in all directions, with looks as dark and threatening as if a battle were commencing.

'Benedicite, my daughters!' said the hermit, 'I must leave you now. You hear and see the signs of a stormy day for the Jews.'

Just as he was speaking, exclamations were heard rapidly and loudly passing from one to another among a knot of peasants hurrying toward the city gate:—'The Jews!—the Jews again! They have crucified another child!—the child of a brave knight!—a Christian child! The Jews!—the Jews!—we will have them all out of Lincoln in another week! We will serve them as the Yorkists served their brethren!' The females took up the cry:—'Their proud women shall no more wear gold and silver borders to their mantles—no more pagan shawls twisted into turbans on their heads! They shall no more curl their long black hair to outvie our Christian ladies! The sorceresses! we will talk to them shortly?' 'The murderers!' cried the men; 'they crucify the Christian children—and we will burn them! Come on!—Come on! They shall have gowns of pitched canvass to-morrow! They shall walk on fire without their brodered morocco slippers! We will wear their diamonds and rubies ourselves, when we dance the morris over their ashes! Come on and see the martyr!'

'Which of the Jewesses was it who crucified the boy?' asked a yeoman, stopping them for an instant.

'Which of them?' cried another person, an armourer, who was going the same way, 'Why, the richest of them!' 'The proudest of them!' said his wife, who was behind. 'The heiress!—the beauty!' said the armourer, 'who never showed herself at any of our sports!' said his wife.

'It cannot be the merchant's daughter!' exclaimed the yeoman, and the peasants echoed the words. 'The same! the same!' answered the armourer. 'The same vaunted creature!' said his wife; 'Judith, the merchant's daughter!'

It was thus that the name of the 'Jew's Daughter,' was first publicly connected with the death of Sir Hugh; and the Lady Isabella, and the unhappy Judith herself, were listeners to the first propagation of the clamour against her.

'Touch your palfrey smartly,' said the Lady Isabella to Judith; 'ride after me at your swiftest pace.' She waved her hand to the hermit, returned his parting salutation, and presently was advancing at an easy, but swift gallop, across the lower part of the city, followed at an equal speed by the terror-struck Judith. The Lady Isabella next turned sharply to the right, and ascended the hill; at the commencement of the steepest part she turned off to the left, and proceeded through the Jews quarter. No stoppage occurred. Judith breathed freer; but what was her surprise when the lady approached the gate of the Hebrew merchant's courtyard, and knocked with the silver handle of her whip. Before Judith was by her side, Caleb had thrown open the door, and the lady had ridden forward into the court, whither the Jewess instantly followed her.

'My father!—my father! O Jehovah, I see him again!' cried Judith, throwing back her veil with such eagerness that she tore it half its length, and the same moment she sprang from the palfrey into the open arms of Jocenus, who had been employed in assisting Caleb and the six Jewish labourers to pack, upon

six sumpter mules, a quantity of his most valuable merchandise for removal.

'My tender child! My Judith! My dove!' he kept on repeating, as he removed the covering entirely from her head and neck, stroked her hair, and kissed her with excessive fondness. The meeting was most affecting. Caleb pretended to be very closely engaged with the girths of the mules, tightening them with great assiduity, but as he stooped, he struck off a large tear from his eye with the inner edge of his wrist, and when he again stood upright, a groan of mingled and strong sensations struggled upwards from his honest breast. The other inferior persons present, who could not perhaps have understood at all the finer friendship that subsisted between the souls of the father and the daughter, yet were at no loss on this occasion to enter into their joy.

'My father!' 'My child!' were for some time the only words the merchant and Judith spoke. She hung on his neck, and her tears dropped, like a plentiful dew, on his beard. His noble Hebrew countenance was presently scrutinised with the inquiring gaze of the most anxious affection. She saw him pale, as if rendered so by severe suffering of body and mind, which she knew had been the case; nor pale only—his cheeks were thinner, and there was a kind of portentous gravity settled on his features, that was not removed by the ecstatic joy with which he strained her to his breast. Judith then viewed his dress—it was his usual office dress—the dark stuff tunic, the pouch, and the inkhorn—but she remembered that when he went to the palace he had not these articles on, therefore she decided that he must have changed since his return, and so she was not able by means of his garb to guess what sort of treatment he had received in the keep-dungeon, but she was able to discern how loosely his tunic hung about his form, and how much he had lost of

his former dignified erectness of carriage. She stepped back from him, looked at him from head to foot, then again threw her head on his bosom, and abandoned herself to tears.

'What hast thou endured, O my father, since I was last happy in thy sight!' she passionately exclaimed. 'I can see—I can see—how thou art changed!'

'My Judith! My gazelle! My dove!' repeated the merchant, caressing her with a thousand sighs, as he encircled her slender waist with one arm, and then, in his turn gazed at her with a melting look of scrutiny, while he evaded making a reply to her remark, but said, 'Thou art more changed than I—sweet daughter! Thou art feverish, and more light of figure than thou wert—more like an air-nymph, Judith!' he cried, rather awkwardly trying to assume a pleasantry very foreign to his heart. 'But I should call you a nun, rather, my child—thou art quite a nun in these solemn crape weeds. When did my daughter part with the faith of her fathers, to receive that of their bitter and deadly persecutors?' His tone was deep, and went to the heart of Judith; his eye was abstracted and fierce, for his great wrongs were swelling at his lofty heart, and the religion of Jesus had never yet taught him to rise above natural resentments.

'Ah, father!' murmured his daughter, as she interpreted the meaning of his terrible glance, 'you speak rashly. All Nazarenes are not bitter and deadly. I owe my life to the Christian lady who has just led me back to my house.'

'And I,' said the merchant instantly, with a generous impulse, turning to the Lady Isabella, who had delicately affected to be quite engaged with her palfrey during the first moments of the reunion of the two attached Hebrews. 'This lady has saved me from death, Judith!'

'You, father!—you!' cried the Jewess. 'Was it she who preserved

you?' her eyes swimming with grateful tenderness, as she fell at the feet of the Lady Isabella. 'Then I shall never thank her enough! Then I shall love her as long as I live!'

The lady stooped and embraced her, speaking affectionately, then raised her, and assured her of her regard and friendship.

Caleb led the two palfreys to the stables, and was just swinging back the door when another individual entered the court.

'Leoni, my friend!' exclaimed the merchant, grasping the hand of the jeweller, who returned the pressure with great warmth.

'By our law, Jocenus, to see you once more among us, is a pleasure so great, that—'

'Never trouble yourself to express it,' said the merchant smiling. 'Yes, friend Leoni, I have once more got out of the lion's den—once more escaped the hands of the Philistines. Here I am, ready to serve myself, my child, you, and my brethren of Israel, as time and need require.'

'Moses our lawgiver grant, Jocenus, that you may be able to serve yourself,' said Leoni; 'if you can do that, you will effectually serve the Israelites in the city, and your own house also.'

'Why seest thou, Leoni,' said Jocenus, 'these six heavily laden mules—whither thinkest thou I was about to have them driven?'

'To my storehouses,' said Leoni.

'Thou hast said it. Wilt thou give them lodgment?'

'Not only my storehouses, but all they contain, are at your disposal,' said Leoni; 'happy am I, if I can be of service to you and Judith, at a time like this.'

'Away with them then,' said Jocenus, turning to the Jewish labourers. 'Caleb will lead the way, and each of you may conduct a mule. Avoid the frequented streets,' Leoni proffered to take upon himself to direct the labourers and see the goods safely disposed of, leaving Caleb behind, as his services here

were so indispensable at present. Jocenus accepted the offer in the same frank spirit with which it was made. A brief and kindly greeting was exchanged between Judith and Leoni, and then the latter left the court, at the head of the little train of loaded mules.

'I miss *one* familiar face here, Leoni—I mean that of my adopted son, Gesta,' said the merchant, as the jeweller was turning to go on his friendly mission.

'Ah,' said the latter, shaking his head, 'it will be very difficult I fear, to get him out of the clutches of those who took him hence.'

'But by holy father Israel, we will try, friend Leoni! we will try,' said Jocenus; and then the gates closed upon the young jeweller, the mules, and the six labourers.

The strong mind of the Lady Isabella now enabled her, in a great degree, to throw off her catholic prejudices against the Jews, and she readily accepted the invitation of Jocenus to dine with him and his daughter before going back to the castle. She surveyed the house with curiosity and admiration, and scarcely wondered at the elevation of imagination which Judith possessed, when beholding the splendour and taste of the bower in which she had been brought up, and when listening to the fine sentiments, and oriental eloquence of the father by whom she had been instructed. Jocenus pressed upon her acceptance a diamond chaplet, of immense worth, and she was prevailed upon to receive it from him, as a token of his gratitude and respect. Judith also made the Lady Isabella a costly present, consisting of a plume of fine pearls, after taking which, having dined, she departed.

The Jew was of course eager to hear from his daughter's lips all that had occurred since his absence; and she was equally anxious to hear from him the recital of his imprisonment and release. Jocenus began by informing her of the fears he had entertained on the day when he was in the Jews Hall:—

'I saw,' said he, 'my daughter, that there was great dissatisfaction among the Christians—their hatred to our people was increasing; and, because they were not allowed to make just such bargains as pleased them, they threatened us with extermination. Prince Edward would have compelled me to accede to very unjust arrangements, but he found me immovable, and in spite of his royal blood, he at length gave way. Then the Earl of Lincoln, that untamed animal, with a fit companion, rained on me a shower of hard words; but they did not move me—I would have my dues! The earl was not inclined to redeem his first securities, he wanted more money from me, and then intended, as I knew beyond a doubt, to clear himself of the whole debt, by throwing me in his prison, and compelling me there to sign an acquittance.'

'But, dear father, perhaps a little concession would have softened him.'

'No, gentle daughter, concessions would not soften the earl; they would but make him more tyrannical and cruel: firmness is the best quality of a Hebrew when dealing with him. I know the Jews in general are afraid of opposing his will in the least, and they stoop to adopt servile manners, and an assumed humility before him—but be such cowardice far from me! He shook me once, Judith—and only once—that was when he threatened *you*.'

'*Me!*' exclaimed Judith, observing the dark expression which was upon her father's face; 'in what had I offended the baron, that he should threaten me? Once he put me in peril of my life, why does he seek to do so twice?'

'My child,' said the merchant, 'you are guilty of four crimes: you are a great heiress—you are very beautiful—you are a fine minstrel—and you love to hide yourself in the privacy of retirement, like all the most virtuous of women.'

'These would be no crimes, if they were true,' said Judith, modestly blushing, while she felt an

exquisite pleasure in her father's praises.

'The worst crimes in the eyes of Christians,' said Jocenus. 'In the first place, while you live, they can never make sure of possessing my goods securely, even though they had effectually destroyed me; in the second place, such men as the Earl of Lincoln, fear that you will give yourself to some Hebrew husband (such a one as Leoni, perhaps)'—Judith looked down at this pointed allusion—'and I should be glad if their fears were realised. They cannot bear that such grace and brilliance, as your person shines with, should illumine the hearts and homes of the despised and abhorred Jews. The prince and the earl, my daughter, would both recommend themselves to your courtesy; and if you will accept neither, or if you will not accept both, you have in one, or in both, great animosity against yourself.'

'I will die by the worst torture!—I will be torn limb from limb!' said Judith, clasping her hands together, 'before I will show them the least courtesy, beyond that of a pure pity for the great degradation of their minds and morals!'

'Spoken like my daughter!' said the merchant; 'and yet, Judith, reflect well; I may not be able to guard you here much longer; our enemies are strong—we are weak. What will become of you should the house be attacked by the earl's myrmidons? My feeble arm would little avail; Caleb is slow, and could contribute little to our defence; the labourers we employ, would of course not be able to resist, perhaps, fifty armed soldiers. What then would become of you? Now listen; the prince, who is heir to the English crown, showed me, before I went to the palace, all the dangers which were surrounding the only joy of my life, my Judith, and proposed to remove her secretly to a bower, at no great distance from Lincoln, after he should have adorned it with everything most charming to her senses—most pleasing to her taste;

her father himself was to superintend the preparations for her reception, although they were to be made at the prince's expense; Hebrew maidens, as many as you pleased, were to attend upon you; you were to engage in the rites of your own religion as often as you chose; you were to be entirely at your own disposal. Yes, those were the words of Prince Edward;—entirely at your own disposal—and I was to visit you freely. There were a great many public examples, said the prince, of most precise ladies, living in great repute on such terms, with rich nobles—as the noted Lady Maria, of Hereford, for instance, and others—but not one of those should be encircled with so much splendour, and treated with so much liberality and kindness, as you should be; although, says his highness, very consistently, you would have no right to expect such treatment, all Hebrew women being the legitimate property of Christian rulers.'

Judith had been leaning on her father's breast, on a seat in the arbour of her garden, but now she threw herself out of his arms, and stood upright, with more than his own spirit and dignity flashing from her dark eyes:—

'Is it my *father*,' said she, with panting bosom, 'who outrages my ears with proposals so detestable? Can it be *he*, who thus wounds me? He used to be *very* jealous for the purity of the daughter of Clari-bel. Ah, heaven! where shall I look now for a friend?' then violently bursting into tears, she cried—'I swear by the king of the universe, I will never listen to the prince a moment! I will never put my foot into his bower unless carried thither by force! and rather than remain an hour in it, I will kill myself with my own hand!'

'Rather than you should, *my* hand should kill thee,' said Jocenus. 'I spoke with assumed calmness, to try thee. I am now satisfied of thy inward strength. I have presently another proposal to make to thee

one of a different nature, which I hope you will accept in a different manner.'

'Now I recognise my father again! Now his heart is again my refuge and my stay!' said Judith: 'and what shall I fear, while such a father is near me? He will protect me as long as he can! and when he cannot protect me no longer, he shall take the knife into his hand, as the Jews in York castle did, and I will die by it, as their women died, to escape a fate infinitely worse than death!'

Jocenus, presently afterwards, described to his shuddering daughter, the indignities he had received in the palace-court, from the Earl of Lincoln's adherents. He had supposed, after the stones, which had been thrown at him into the cellar, struck him, that he had been dying. He experienced the sensations of death: a rushing sound in his ears—his eyes misty—his limbs powerless—and his breath sinking. When he received the last blow he was barely conscious, but he could, he fancied, feel himself instantaneously expire, pronouncing the name of Judith. He then went on with the recital of his sufferings, as follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

I AWAKENED from my lethargy in a small, dark dungeon, which I erroneously supposed to be situated in one part of the palace. I was covered with bruises, and my joints were swollen and stiff; a heap of dirty straw was my bed; a small round hole in the roof admitted a few gleams of light, and this was my only window.

'I sought water, for I was maddened with thirst, but not a drop could I find, and none was given to me until some hours afterwards; however, when I took the pitcher into my hands, I would not have exchanged its contents for the richest nectar of the fabled deities! a long draught I took, and then sinking back upon my wretched couch, slept profoundly.

'I awoke hungry and full of care and grief; I was supplied with meat, bread, and beer; after eating heartily of which, I felt much recruited in strength, and the elasticity of my mind, and the firmness of my resolution returned. I walked backwards and forwards in my cell for a short time, until the soreness and aching of my bruises compelled me to rest again. I endured the pain with as much stoicism as I could, until the few sunbeams, which descended into my prison through the grated opening in the roof, gradually ceased. The darkness with which I was then surrounded, seemed to increase my anguish, thus rendering me less capable of enduring it. I became dreadfully impatient as the hours wore away, and pictured to myself the worst horrors. I saw in imagination the earl tearing my child from her home—his followers plundering her and myself of our well-won possessions—destroying her favourite statues, the trees of her garden, the rich ornaments of her beloved home, burning her books, and manuscripts, her costly and plentiful wardrobe, depriving her of everything she loved and valued. I saw her persecuted in the castle, calling in vain upon her father for relief, and perishing in desperation.

'These frightful images remained with me the whole of that night, tormenting me, and lashing me into the most fierce passions. The darkness at length became peopled with the dismal phantasms of my brain. I saw shapes flit past; I heard voices cry to me; sometimes there was Claribel, my wife, imploring me to fly to the aid of her daughter; sometimes there was Judith herself. It was in vain I shut my eyes, and pressed my hands on them, to exclude the visions. I was feverish—excited—and nothing but a supply of light and air could relieve me.

'To catch the first breath of air, the first ray of light, which would come into my dungeon in the morning, I groped my way to the top of

some stone steps, which I had observed the day before, and sat under the ceiling, leaning against the wall, with my face turned to the iron grating. I had not been long in this situation, when some heavy fastenings were undone in the room above, a door creaked loudly on its hinges, and a bright beam of daylight fell on my uplifted face and illumined part of my dungeon; at the same time a current of air descended fresh and pleasant.

'I then listened to the footsteps of a person who entered above, hoping they would be directed to the trapdoor, and that I should presently learn how long I was to be detained in this gloomy confinement. I was upon the rack of expectation and suspense. I called aloud—but it was evident to me that I had not made myself heard; and presently the footsteps passed away. Then I remembered how many of my Hebrew brethren had perished in the prisons of barons and priests; and especially called to mind the sufferings of your mother's brother, Judith under the lord of Stamford. My only hopes were fastened on the Bishop—I could not think he would allow me to die in his palace without a fair and public hearing, even if the worst crimes had been imputed to me.

'Several blasts of clarions, near and remote, reached my ear; then a number of stones rolled along the floor over my head; and shortly after, a lumbering bombard was discharged just outside my dungeon, shaking the foundations with its tremendous roar.

'Surely, thought I, still more alarmed, this is not the palace; these clarion tones proceed from sentinels stationed at regular distances on the walls, and now going off from their night watch; that bombard, too belonged to the fortress. I listened again, hoping to hear the matin chaunt from the chapel of the palace, but not the most distant strain could I distinguish. It was impossible for me to believe that the morning mass

could be performed in the palace, and I not hear at least some echoes of the service, for I was sure that my cell was not very remote from the principal parts of the fabric I was in, and I recollected that the mingled chorus of voices and instruments, with which the bishop's chapel every morning resounded, I had often heard at the distance of some streets from the building.

'All doubts were removed, or rather converted into certainty, when I heard an old revelling song of Normandy sang at the door in rough and loud martial tones, the burden being taken up by corresponding voices. I felt assured that these soldiers were not part of the regular guard of the palace, as the latter I knew were enjoined, on pain of penance, to refrain from singing such songs, on their stations, in the precincts of the episcopal residence. Where then was I? Had I been conveyed to the castle? If so, it must have been by the orders of the prior; and, in having been thus delivered, by the most subtle of my enemies, to the most violent, what evil treatment might I not have reason to expect!

'I could see nothing beyond the opening over my head, on account of the great thickness of the ceiling in which the grating was set. In my desperation I seized one of the bars with my right hand, and endeavoured, with all the strength I had, to shake it from its holds, but it resisted all my efforts. I then went down the steps, and threw myself groaning on my straw.

'A bolt was drawn back in one of the darkest corners of the dungeon and a low door pushed inward. I arose directly, and with as much ease and firmness as I could command, faced the prior, who entered in his dark weeds. He was pleased to ask me, with much show of courtesy, and in a very smooth tone, how I felt myself after the severe injuries I had received—if I was willing to accept of superior accommodations—and, in particular, whether I was inclined to make amicable terms for my release.

'My first impulse, at all risk, was to demand his absence, for his hypocrisy was even less endurable than his malevolence; and whatever he should say, would, I felt certain, only be with the ultimate view of working my ruin, and advancing the interests of his ambition. But I did not wholly speak my mind—I checked myself for thy sake, Judith—requesting to be informed if it was to him I was indebted for my confinement. He said, in reply, that it was to him, but I should not forget that in sending me hither he had saved my life. Prior, said I, I know that you are not anxious for my preservation, unless for your own benefit, tell me therefore what you expect from me.

'He directed me to follow him, which, after a little deliberation, I did. We passed through many vaults and passages, some lit with iron lamps, hung under arches, or from roof, others by chinks in the walls, or by openings in the ceilings.

It was a dismal way, my daughter—thou couldst hardly picture to thy fancy such places as I went through—bare, moist, abounding in reptiles, the air corrupted by want of motion, like water that has long been stagnant. I sickened as I respired it, though the prior, who looked like the very genius of those dark realms, seemed not at all affected.'

'Alas, father!' exclaimed Judith, 'were you not afraid to venture alone in such places with a man like the prior?'

'No, child, though I had no weapon, I was not afraid. Every bone in my frame hardened into iron—every limb grew so strong as I thought of *thee*, that had he been a giant he would scarce have overcome me.'

'But father,' said Judith, again, shrinking to his breast, 'others might have assisted him to injure you.'

'We will not trouble ourselves, Judith, with imagining all that *might* have happened. It is sufficient that I live, and am with thee, after having dared much, as you shall hear:

'The prior, when we had gone some way under ground, took a rusty hand-lamp from a niche in a vault, and lighted me up a great number of steps; at the top, he applied a key to a door, and admitted me into a little chamber adjoining the guard-chamber of the keep. I had been led from a small tower, on the north side of the fortress, to the great tower on the south, by means of a subterranean communication. I prepared to see the earl, whose state rooms were situated near this room, and anticipating as nearly as I could the designs of my enemies who now had me in their power, arranged my course of action.

'The prior pointed out a chair on which I sat down, then said to me these words, as nearly as I can recollect:—'I told you lately, merchant, that I was your mortal foe, but you have it now in your power to make me your firm friend. Before I point out to you the means, hear a candid statement of the causes which have made me hostile to you. You have whispered abroad that I have wronged the Lord de Gant, by making use of the wealth his lady left, to purchase influence in high quarters, and to obtain preferment.'

'If so, said I, why, prior, have you not publicly impugned me. It is death to any Jew, by English custom, who attempts to injure a Christian by word or deed. As I am a son of Abraham, I will bear the event of an open judgment, nor believe myself wronged even if my condemnation ensue. Bring me into the hall of justice before the bishop, the legate, the prince, and the high officers—charge me with defaming you before them—bring your witnesses;—I will bring no witnesses, but will there abide my sentence, alone, unfriended. I will only speak my defence; and who, reverend prior will give heed to a miserable Israelite like me? I will only state simply what I have suspected, and what I know; and you cannot fear any ill consequences to yourself from such a statement.

'He looked darkly on me as he

said 'And may I ask, Jew, what it is you suspect—what it is you know—regarding the money of the Gants?'

'I answered certainly. My common sense informs me the confessor did not take with him to Palestine all the coins which I gave in exchange for the Lady Helen's moveables and ornaments. He must have left them behind, and why not in your charge, as the young heir of Lord Hugh was entrusted to you? I say, also, that I suspect the confessor never reached Palestine.'

'Soh—you suspect me of having employed some one to kill him—do you?' said the prior, coming nearer to me, and bending on me his eyes, that glittered from beneath his cowl, like a serpent's. 'And whom think you, most discerning Jew, I appointed to perform that office—one of your own people?—ha.'

'O, my dear father, he wanted to try you, to see if Gesta had betrayed him to you. But how did you bear that question?'

'My daughter, I was, of course, unaware at the time, that he alluded to Gesta, therefore I answered very composedly—That I feared there were Jews bad enough for any ill office as there were Christians, but I had no reason to surmise that any of the former had had anything to do with an act so foul. He walked up and down the room pondering deeply, then said with a sneer, 'and this is the amount of the arguments you would use in your defence?'

'Not the full amounts, I answered. I would call upon you to explain where you had obtained the ready money which you have of late years spent so secretly, yet so lavishly, if you had not had it from the coffers of the Gants?'

'Soh!' ejaculated the prior, and turned pale as stone. 'You are bold, merchant. Do you consider where you are?'

'Yes, I answered; and I know, also, that you have purposed to share with the earl in the plunder of my effects, and that you are looking

out for the most politic way by which to remove me and my daughter.

'The prior smiled, as if he would have said, and I have *found* that way. I said, further, you durst not kill me, for I have friends, powerful ones, would render that step unsafe for you, perhaps. Some are now distant, but the news of my death would presently bring them upon you, as you know.

'N—you are mistaken,' said he; 'you have no friends who can do you any service. You are dangerous to me—more dangerous than all your friends. I shall risk their animosity.'

'Do so, said I, without seeming in the least disturbed. But why have you brought me hither! The dagger or poison would have speedily made an end of me in the dungeon I have left—or you might have kept me without food—a few days of lingering agony, and my lips would have been closed for ever.

'I know that,' said the prior, 'and I should have made use of one of those means, but that I was willing to save you, if possible. And this brings me back to the point at which we started; you may purchase your release, and the safety of one half of your possessions, by the sacrifice of the other half. If you will give up one half to the earl, myself, and the legate, you shall be set free.'

'To be once more at home—once more at liberty to guard my daughter—was such a paramount good, that I would have been very willing to give up even half my wealth, if I could have been sure that upon doing so I should have been released, and suffered to proceed with my commerce in peace. But upon making inquiries of the prior, I learnt, that even if I paid a ransom so enormous, I should be bound to comply with many galling conditions before I should be permitted to leave the castle; and having reason to suspect that the prior had deeper designs than I was sensible of hid under this proposition, I refused to listen to any such terms. He then

said, that a terrible crime was about to be laid to my charge, that my daughter was involved in it, and that it would be quite impossible for either of us could escape from the fatal consequences, without his immediate and secret aid. What the crime was he would not say.'

'I know,' said Judith, 'O, my father—Jehovah, shield us!'

'Softly;—you shall not tell me, dear child, until I have finished, and then the means of escaping the doom threatened shall be discussed between us, calmly and wisely. Be mistress of yourself, daughter. Yield not to fears. Courage and fortitude as I have always taught you, are the next blessing to quiet and security.'

'The prior proceeded—'I have promised certain parties a very large sum of money, which I must by some means procure within a month. If I do not obtain it, I shall lose advantages which I have been seeking thirty years. But that is a loss I cannot—will not—bear! You, merchant, can give me the amount—for you are immensely rich. Supply me with it—and swear by all you believe, to be secret—and I will plan your escape from Lincoln and undertake to have you safely conveyed to the sea-side, whence you may make your way to the foreign lands from which you came.'

'And my daughter?' I said, inquiringly.

'She shall be with with you,' he answered, 'and by the relics of St. Edward, merchant, the earl shall have no notice of your flight, nor any other person!'

'But what is the sum!' I asked.

'He drew from under his gown a folded parchment, and laying it before me, pointed out one corner. Two thousand zechins to the legate, said I, that is a sum indeed!'

'Great as it is,' said he, 'it must be doubled to supply my present need. Look here, merchant, at this second parchment,' and he drew another from the folds of that I had just seen; 'here you see is the same sum set down, and the date, June 30th, when it is to be paid to an

Italian prelate, resident in England at the same time with the other two thousand zechins.'

'I saw it was so; without doubt he was pledged, by these parchments, to raise the sums he said. Then, said I, reverend prior, you are going to be an abbot, and one of a rich see?'

'I am,' he answered; and I was satisfied that he had bought the dignity from those persons whose names were on the parchments, and that he was to be installed by illegal practises.'

'He rode by the legate, father, to-day, as abbot of Crowland,' said Judith.

'I am not surprised to hear it, daughter. Yet that is a distinguished abbey, and a very wealthy one, that he has obtained—and by what means I have told you. This is the way the Christians elevate themselves.'

'Not all, dear father,' said Judith. 'Bishop Grosteste is honest-minded I have heard you say; and often have you remarked that if ever man deserved distinction it was he.'

'I say so still, my child. But dost thou mark, his very goodness makes him detested by his corrupt brethren. The pope, and the archbishop of Canterbury, have excommunicated him, and he is imprisoned in his own palace. Nothing but oppression, unruly passions, and blood-thirstiness, thrive in our day. Well, the prior offered, for four thousand zechins, to have us both conducted in safety to a sea-port. I asked a few hours for reflection, and was led to a gloomy chamber, where an inferior dinner was spread for me. The prior left me here alone, drawing the bolt of the door outside. And now I could not tell how to decide best, being placed between miserable alternatives. I saw no way of procuring freedom but by ransom. Yet so vast a sum as four thousand zechins, it was terrible to think of parting with thus! And to leave England, where I was so delightfully settled, and where my

basket and my store were so blessed, was distracting! yet, to remain in safety, seemed almost impossible. If I refused to give the prior the money, might he not rend everything I had from me? and if I determined to stay in England, might he not bring me and my precious child to torture and to death? Again, if I complied with his wishes, what security had I, beyond his bare word (upon which I had no great reliance), that he would indeed secure our safety as far as the sea-side? It occurred to me that the prince might seize you upon the way, with the prior's connivance, as we should have no guard about us but the prior's hirelings. I should, perhaps, be put on board forcibly, and be separated from the delight of my heart for ever. If, however, I rejected every proposal of the prior, there was still the earl, whose brutal ferocity would not spare me, but who, very likely, would subject me to insults and bodily pains such as I could not endure to think of.

'When the prior came again, I sought to know the nature of the crime which he had said was about to be imputed to me and my daughter. He would not satisfy me on this point, but to prove that what he had said was no fabrication, showed me a written authority from the legate of the pope, to take prisoner, in his holiness' name, myself and Judith.'

'Is it so, indeed, father!' said Judith, the colour fading from her lips and cheek. 'Are we the special objects of the displeasure of the high personages of the church? This agrees with what I have heard in the streets, when riding with Lady Isabella. O Jehovah! can an accusation so dreadful be spread against us, under the authority of such personages, and we escape death and infamy? No—I dare not hope it! Father, the people say *I* crucified Sir Hugh, and it is openly said he perished here.'

'My daughter, I was prepared for something dreadful—but this is more dreadful than I know how to

bear. Crucify the child you loved so much! Lord Hugh *cannot* believe it!'

'Yet, father, he came once before the boy was missing, but has never visited our house since then, although he had professed to be very anxious for your safety.'

Jocenus felt this most acutely, and exclaimed, 'He then is deluded!—deceived!—and on such a point! This is the height of misfortune! I heard that he was arrived, and built much on his friendship. Let it pass. So expectations deceive us; and we find, by sad experience, that there is no trust to be placed in man. Grieve not, dear child!—let it pass. The present time demands your energies. You must not droop. Let me kiss the tear from thine eye—thou fairer image of myself! Be bold now, Judith.'

'Father, I could not have thought Lord Hugh would ever have believed me guilty of his son's death!—that he who had known us so long, and once so intimately, would have listened a moment to such a report—would have judged me capable of cruelty so monstrous!'

'I should have thought not, indeed—but let it pass—let it pass. I almost regret I did not take the chances of the prior's offer.'

'You refused to give him the zechins, then, father?'

'Yes, I did, and was then told I had sealed the fate of my house—which seems likely to be true. I was cast into a dungeon, of the most noisome description, under the keep; I was ill-treated there night and day, and narrowly escaped with my life.'

'How was that, father?' said Judith, rising with the merchant, and walking forwards.

'The last evening which I spent in confinement in the castle, I was led to expect would be the last of my existence. At midnight the prior told me I was to die, by the earl's order. In this juncture came the Lady Isabella, having obtained a key of my cell from the countess, and

giving me a black serge cloak, in which I enveloped myself, led me out to the inner court of the fortress, whence I found no difficulty in escaping.'

'Blessings upon her for that good deed!' exclaimed Judith.

'Our debt of gratitude to her is great indeed!' said the merchant. 'And now, Judith, how was it that you met with her, and contrived to inspire her with esteem for you?'

Judith, commencing from the hour when her father and herself had parted, described the anxiety, the distress of mind, which had led her to venture upon going to the castle, and her adventures there:—

'When the Lady Isabella returned to me,' she continued, 'as I was singing to two ladies, her relatives, she begged me, in a whisper, to be easy in mind, for my father, the merchant, would soon be released through the intervention of the countess. Little did I think he was already free! I slept that night in a closet adjoining the chamber of my new-found, noble friend, who, as I was taking off the moorish disguise I had worn, entered, and put to me a number of questions concerning Sir Hugh. I answered freely, and, as the event proved, satisfactorily. She came in to me again early in the morning, told me Sir Hugh was dead, and that he was to be interred in the minster on that day. Bitterly did I deplore his loss! I could hardly have lamented him more had he been the nearest of kin to me on the earth. Lady Isabella must have seen my grief was sincere and that I had not anticipated hearing of the event. I suppose it was to try me still further that she refrained from making me acquainted with the manner in which it had been said the boy died.

'Have you any objection to change your moorish dress for one that has been worn by a Christian lady?' said the Lady Isabella to me, displaying the mourning robe and veil in which I returned hither. She then inquired if I could ride on horseback; and, being satisfied that

I had had some practice in that art, explained to me that I might see Sir Hugh's bier, if I would take off the dye which was upon my face, apparel myself in the articles which she presented to me, mount on her palfrey, and go with her in the cavalcade to the priory of Icanno. I did so—and saw my little favourite in the profound sleep of death. He looked not as if he had suffered any violent pangs. Every feature was smiling, and expressive of a heavenly tranquillity! I think lady Isabella had brought me in sight of the body to see what effect it produced on me, and was convinced by my manner that I knew nothing of the alleged crucifixion, for when she asked me if I had seen anything extraordinary on his hands and feet, I was of course not in the least disturbed, but took little notice of the words, especially as they were carelessly pronounced.'

'And the people of Lincoln generally have seized the idea that you have crucified Sir Hugh?' said the merchant, as he walked beside his daughter further down the garden. 'Then I must lose no time in settling you, my child, in some place of safety, where one who loves you, I think, almost as well as your father loves you, will guard you better than I can. I cannot, in this emergency, introduce the subject as smoothly as I could wish. Judith must make allowances.' He stopped, and spoke a single word with expression:—
'Leoni!'

Judith knew his meaning, and at such a time shrank from giving a denial to his wishes.

'My daughter, feel for me!' said he. 'To press upon you an alliance with him is revolting to my pride—distressing to my feelings! Yet I should not fulfil my duty to you as a parent if I refrained now from doing so. The friendship which exists between him and myself must alone considerably recommend him to my daughter, for it would be a grief to her if her husband were not dear to her father.'

'You say what I feel to be true,'

said Judith. 'It would be a grief to me, indeed, if the two nearest and most beloved relatives I possessed were not friendly with each other—the greater their amity, the higher would be my bliss. And Leoni is recommended to me when my father speaks for him with such earnestness.'

'Nay, Judith,' said the merchant, interrupting her, 'that is enough. You will gratify your father's heart by giving your hand to Leoni *immediately*—our present dangers demand the concession from you. Now do not damp me. He will remove you at once to another country, whither I will follow when Gesta is free, and settle myself with you. Then we shall only think of this troubled time as of a trial passed, the remembrance of which will heighten future happiness.'

'Father—more beloved in this season of alarm and grief than ever before—dearest father, hear me with your utmost kindness! I never should love Leoni! I know not why, except that he is, perhaps, too gay, too confident, to suit my disposition. I respect him, value him, but cannot love him;—I have told him so, for he has made me the offer of his affections while you were away.'

'You refused him, then?'

'Unequivocally, father. Ah, how gloomy you turn! You are hurt to hear it.'

The merchant, grasping his beard in his hand, took a few steps forward, in a retired path, exclaiming, 'Now, holy father Israel, we are wrecked indeed!'

Judith stood still, sighing, her eyes fearful and melancholy. A tame Asiatic bird flew upon her head; she raised her hand and took it to her breast, and pressed her lips on its warm plumage; then a peacock, spreading all its rich tail-feathers to the sun, strutted, with a stately step, to her knee, she stroked it gently and burst into tears:—'What would become of you,' she cried, 'had I deserted you? Who would feed you, and cherish you then?' The white greyhound, which

had once been the favourite of young Sir Hugh, next came near, frolicking in the grass, wagging its tail, and looking up in the face of its master with barks of joy.

Judith stepped close to the merchant, took hold of his hand, and threw one arm around his neck. He looked at her in silence, then said—'Will you not suffer Leoni to place you in a state of security, while yet you have an opportunity for flight? For my sake, Judith, if you will not for your own, yield to my wishes!—Come! You will pity my anguish on your behalf—you will do as I request. Though you have refused my friend—the slightest hint will bring him back to your feet. You will not repent hereafter—having being persuaded by me. You will be as Rachel and as Sarah—women beloved of their husbands, and favoured of God. What should I feel if thou wert torn from me to a prison?—Thou, who hast been the harmony of my life!—the sole spring of my happiness!—the light of my home—for twenty-four years. You have it in your power to save me from such fearful anguish—and shall I plead to you in vain? Harken to me, my daughter: by to-morrow afternoon you may be far off;—the prince, the earl, the prior, and the officers may seek you in vain. But how can I preserve you here?'

'You are in danger, father, as well as I. The hands of the wicked are against you—how will *you* be preserved here?'

'Think not of that, Judith—I must tarry for Gesta's release, and until my merchandise is placed in security, after that I will come to thee.'

'If you must remain, suffer me to remain also—I may be of service to him—I was of service to you. Indeed I cannot flee and leave you both in peril, alone. We three have dwelt together in happiness, let us not forsake one another in misery. At a distance from you I should suffer a thousand deaths; besides, not even to save my life, dare I

wrong Leoni by entering into marriage with him.'

'How wrong him, daughter?'

'I should merely submit to it as a painful necessity.'

'You allow it to be a necessity, then?'

'Father—father, you distract me! Yet I am confident you approve my resolution, which is fixed and unalterable. To make a mere convenience of an honourable man, is base indeed! and I cannot sully my lips, and stain my soul, by giving utterance to vows to which my heart refuses assent.'

They returned to the house, and sat on the terrace, both snuffering great pain of mind; the hound laid his head on Judith's knees, and sought to attract her attention, but she was too unhappy to notice the fondling animal. Her eye was directed down the elegant garden, but discerned nothing; the wind, to which she had so often listened with profound delight, made its accustomed harmonies in the trees, but she heard them not; the sky above her was beautifully shaded with twilight hues, the faint outline of the waning moon being just distinguishable upon it, but it did not charm her heart. Her spirit was burdened, and nature could afford her no relief. The merchant fastened his gaze on the funereal monument which he had erected to his wife:—'Soon,' said he, 'that marble may be levelled by those who hate us.' He looked through the portico which was before the house, and at the porch he dwelt upon the Hebrew mottoes inscribed here and there. 'A few weeks, and other steps,' he again said, 'may tread rudely here; a few weeks, and the hand of the spoiler may tear down all that I have raised up. But I can bear anything except the loss of Judith! Let me know she is safe, and at liberty, and I fear nothing—will grieve for nothing! The increase of my house may depart—my goods may be taken away—yet if my only child is left to me, pure, I heed not.'

'I know it is my father's exceeding love for me which has led him to feel so extremely my rejection of Leoni,' said Judith, 'and sad as is the necessity which compels me to wound him. But my father should not fear for me too much. Does he forget the Lord God, who threw the Egyptians into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters? Is the ear of Jehovah heavy, that he cannot hear? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save?'

'My hope fails, my heart sinks, Judith. I know the Jehovah of our fathers can help, and cast down—but it seems He is casting us down, and not helping us.'

'Truly it seems so! Yet hitherto we have been hedged in with blessings on every side; hitherto, our incomings and outgoings have been favoured, and our substance has been increased. If our God hath given, let Him also take away. All we have is His, let Him do as seemeth Him good.'

'But our lives, my child!'

'Are also His, father; and though we suffer, let us not charge Him foolishly. I will stay with you until violence separates us, and we will strengthen and assist each other.'

Jocenus would have persuaded her to go to Newark or Boston, and conceal herself there until the present panic had subsided; but she firmly resisted all his arguments, and determined to remain with him happen what might.

He then applied himself vigorously to make preparations for resisting an attack on the house in case one should be made, and consulted with Leoni and Caleb as to the best means of securing his daughter, while she passed up and down the house aiding his arrangements.

CHAPTER XX.

QUIETLY the night passed, but no person had slept in the merchant's house; Leoni had been busy there until an advanced hour, assisting Jocenus and his servants to clear the store-houses of all but the least

valuable property, to hide in places contrived for the purpose, his jewels, Jewish bills of exchange, and an immense quantity of Flemish, Italian, and British money; and lastly, to remove to a set of rooms, underground, a few articles of furniture, for the use of Jocenius and his daughter, who intended to seclude themselves in this part of their residence, hoping thereby to escape detection, if a search should be made for them.

It was just daylight when Judith with Belaset, first descended after her father and Leoni, to this retreat. She sighed deeply as the pure and joyful beams of sunrise retreated from her view, and lingered an instant in the hall, on the ground floor, before entering the dark opening which was before her. In the centre of the hall stood a representation, in alabaster, of the ark of the early Jewish fathers, with its mysterious symbols, the cherubim above, and inscribed with Hebrew texts; it was placed there apparently for ornament, but really to cover the entrance to these apartments in which the merchant and his daughter were about to conceal themselves. A small door, which the most curious eye could not detect, and the secret fastenings of which were only known to the merchant, was at the back of the ark; the steps within were in good condition, and at the bottom, a wall seemed to stop the way, but this wall contained a second door, which no stranger to the place could possibly have discovered. As soon as Judith had passed through this, her spirits, in some measure, revived. She had been accustomed to think of this part only as containing secure cellars for her father's superfluous riches, but she now perceived that it was likely to afford herself and the merchant, an asylum, both convenient and secure.

'I was not aware, father,' said she, 'that you had built a wall at the foot of the stairs.'

'It was done but lately, daughter,' he rejoined. A broad passage

presented itself: the merchant held up the silver lamp he carried to the stone walls—'There is little damp here, you see, my child—all is in sound repair. I think, and hope, your health will not suffer much from the change.'

'Oh no—not at all, father,' said Judith, with renewed cheerfulness. 'But how is the admission of healthy air contrived?' she inquired. 'I am not sensible of any closeness—I can breathe as freely here as above.'

'You shall be led into all the secrets of this quarter hereafter,' replied Jocenius, ushering her into a room that had been hastily hung with tapestry, and covered with rushes and eastern matting. A ruddy wood fire was burning on the hearth, and a lamp stand stood at the opposite end, supporting an antique gilded lamp, lighted, and scenting the apartment with its delightful fragrance. Jocenius drew toward the hearth a couch, heaped with soft silken cushions.

'Draw near, my child—sit down and be thankful with me for this place of temporary refuge,' said he.

He arranged with tender kindness the cushions in the middle for her seat, and rested beside her, while Leoni took a chair opposite. The three conversed together concerning Gesta, during breakfast, and after the meal was over, Judith, who had scarcely eaten any thing, retired to a room in which Belaset was arranging her toilet, and threw herself in a recumbent position under the canopy of her bed. The servant was going out, when, endeavouring to hide her emotion, she said, 'My lady, do you not think Keturah has been put into one of the horrid prisons of the castle?'

'I have no reason to think so,' replied Judith. 'I trust, Belaset, to the good lady who restored me to my home, and saved my father from death, she promised that during this day Keturah should be sent hither safely.'

'Thank you, my dear mistress,

my mind will be easier now ; I have been very much troubled for her—we have been as sisters in your service.'

'Before nightfall she will join you again, I make no doubt,' said Judith, and Belaset left the room. 'These girls have loved each other,' Judith reflected ; 'the bond which unites them seems slight, yet it is wound around their hearts, and one cannot divide it without greatly injuring happiness. Who that is so wise would condemn the affections of the lowly, which, without ostentation, assuming nothing, are yet the very heart-strings of society—the hallowed incense which everywhere perfumes it.'

Her thoughts then reverted to the two beings whose love for her had been so unvarying through the whole of her life :—

'My father ! Gesta !' she exclaimed ; 'what am I without them. Jehovah, hear thou the singing of the prisoner ! Give peace and health once more to the bruised spirit ! Restore to his friends the unhappy Gesta—my more than brother.'

She checked herself in her fervent petition, looking upwards with swimming eyes, then repeated solemnly the words. 'Be still, and know that I am God !' Yes, she murmured—'be still my trembling heart ! Oh, my soul, be still ! Why all this tremor in my frame ?—why all this agitation ? The earthquake, though terrible, is soon over—the storm, though violent, is soon past. Do the fierce winter winds blow always ? Doth the sea always rage tempestuously ? Death is but a brief pain, and the happiness of the blessed endures after death, and without end. To contemplate perpetually the face of Deity in the seventh heaven, may not be my lot, yet, let me but reach up to the lowest region of Paradise, and I shall sorrow no more, but enjoy peace and holiness eternally. Surpassing felicity ! Let me fix my eye steadfastly on it, and receive from the prospect, strength wherewith to

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bear the sufferings I may shortly be called on to endure.'

She now reviewed, with elevated firmness, the circumstances that were arrayed against her. The features of the age gave her nothing to hope if she should be taken prisoner ; all parties—she had heard enough to be convinced—contemned and hated the Hebrews ; all would combine to condemn her, she being a Jewess ; and, though there might be no more than a bare suspicion, that she had perpetrated the shocking deed, yet, that bare suspicion would be fatal to her. Christians, even the most chivalrous, gentle, and devout, would, she justly thought, be steeled against her by the force of prejudice, acting with natural feelings ; those enslaved by credulous fears would be eager for her death, dreading lest their own children should be drawn by magic into her house, and share Sir Hugh's fate ; the ignorant and coarse would take pleasure in the pangs to which she might be subjected, as wild beasts take pleasure in tearing their prey ; and the cunning and malicious, who had designs to serve, would wilfully shut their eyes on probabilities in favour of her innocence.

Wearied in body and mind she fell into a gentle slumber, from which she was awakened by a soft voice at the door of her chamber. It was Keturah, who had just returned, and was the bearer of two letters. Judith arose immediately and admitted her, saying—

'I am exceedingly glad to see you back. You have risked much for my sake, Keturah, and I shall not forget your kindness.'

'O my dear mistress,' exclaimed the girl, 'that Lady Isabella is so good a Christian, it is a pity she is not a Jewess ! But I had a taste of danger after you rode away from the castle, and there was such an ado there. The earl found out that the merchant had escaped from his keep, and so stormed, and threatened the countess, that she was taken dangerously ill, and died about two hours ago.'

'Poor lady!' cried Judith. 'Did you learn who was with her?'

'The Lady Isabella, only; for the countess would have no one else in her room; but just before she died, her barbarian of a husband burst the door open, and railed on the Lady Isabella for having assisted the flight of a cur of a Jew, as he called my master.'

'Ah!' cried Judith; 'I fear that good lady has brought trouble on herself by aiding us.'

'I fear she has, my dear mistress,' said Keturah. 'Yet she begged me to assure you, that she was very happy in having had the opportunity to perform an act of common duty, that had proved serviceable to you and Jocenus.'

'The simplicity and humility with which she confers benefits so important,' said Judith, 'heightens in my mind the value of them. Deeply do I honour her! But you said you had been endangered; surely the earl did not find out that you resided with me?'

'Not exactly, I believe, my lady; but he sent for me to be questioned and examined, before the prior of Icanno. Instead, however, of going to him, I made the best of my way hither. The Lady Isabella bade me not tarry an instant longer, lest, in the present temper of the earl, I should lose my life—and I was not slow in obeying her injunction; she herself conducted me to the hill-top, outside the castle, walking in front of me as though I had been her minstrel. But what a change!' she exclaimed, looking around, 'to think you, my lady, should have come to these rat-resorts to live!—and yet they are comfortable enough.'

'The letters you have,'—said Judith—'who are they from?'

'This,' replied Keturah, presenting one to her mistress, 'is from the Lady Isabella—and this,' here she put a second into her hand, with an air of curiosity, 'was given to me at the gate of our court above, by a mendicant friar.'

Judith hastily cut the strings

which bound the letters, and removed the large seals to which they were attached. The seal of the stranger's letter surprised her; she examined it by lamplight.

'My eyes deceive me,' said she, 'or this seal bears the arms and device of the Gants. Look here, Keturah, the portcullis-bars, the sleeping leopard, and the motto, 'Who will rouse me up.''

'Indeed it is Lord Hugh's seal,' said Keturah, also looking at it with surprise; 'perhaps, my lady, the letter is from him.'

'From him!—very unlikely indeed,' said Judith, with a heightened colour, opening it. Her eye was quickly directed to the name of the writer, on seeing which she uttered an exclamation of pleasure and surprise—'It is from Gesta!' then, looking over the open page with eagerness, her looks changed, she dropped the letter on her toilet, raised her silver-fringed handkerchief to her face, and stood for some time motionless. Keturah at once understood the sad purport of the epistle, and forbore to disturb her mistress until an agonizing burst of tears from Judith, prevented her quick feelings from further restraint.

'Ah, lady—dearest mistress—Gesta is going to die!—is not that the intelligence which you have received?' she cried.

'Gesta by this time is dead!' said Judith. 'Go and tell my father and Leoni this—tell them all cares for Gesta are now useless—he is at rest.'

'O Elias! my poor young master! He never was happy in this life, and here is a melancholy ending for him! O Elias! This news will be grief for Caleb; he will never cease to grieve for him.'

'Peace, Keturah. Do as I wish you. Go directly to my father and speak the tidings as calmly as you can.'

When Keturah was gone from the room, Judith gave a loose to her grief, which was violent, her sensibility being of the most warm nature, now keenly alive to suffer-

ing, as formerly it had been to joy. A series of shocks lately had altered her feelings to a mournful temperature; all that was sorrowful impressed her peculiarly; and her sense of the awful, and the eternal, rose almost to sublimity.

She sat down, and carefully perused again the letter of him who had once been considered her cousin, stopping sometimes to wipe the blinding tears from her eyes, sometimes to re-peruse his sentences, the profound passion, and intense humility of which, under the circumstances, affected her more strongly than any thing had ever affected her before. An enclosure had dropped to the floor when she first opened the letter, which she now held in her hand:—

‘You will remember giving me the three flowers, enclosed—I have worn them ever since next my heart, with a lock of your hair, and had intended that they should remain there until the hands that prepared me for my grave, removed them thence. But as I am now about to suffer a violent death under a savage executioner, I fear lest these relics should be profaned, and therefore return them to you, from whom I took them. The home in which my life has been spent, I shall never see again. I have received notice to prepare, in one hour, for execution on a private scaffold, raised in the little square that stands in the centre of my prison; there I shall bid farewell to every racking jealousy—every torturing doubt—every presumptuous hope—every alarm—every remorse—every despair. Farewell sister! The meanest and most worthless of beings ventures to take his everlasting leave of you, addressing you by this endeared title. You have been my playmate in childhood—my fellow-scholar in youth—my revered mistress in more advanced years: you have been more than all this to me—but my words fail when I would have them most eloquent. I have no language to express how much I owe to you—how dear you have

been to my wretched, guilty heart. Remember me when I am gone. I ask no grief for my fate—only remember me. The tears I let fall blot the words—’

Judith broke off an instant; covered with a tremulous hand the withered flowers and the lock of hair, and pressed them to her bosom, with the open letter, which was now damp with her own tears, that had fallen on the very stains which Gesta's had made. Presently resuming her persual she read these lines:—

‘There have been times in the last five years when I would have given worlds to weep—but the relief was then denied me. Now my eyes are fountains of tears. Oh, to see you once more—but once! To hear you forgive me the gloom I have carried about in your presence so long—the boldness of my affections in fastening themselves so entirely to you—and every other error you have perceived in me. Pardon me all, Judith! I shall die in the consolatory belief in your forgiveness and friendship.’

She was so engrossed with the letter that she did not hear the merchant's foot in the chamber, and he stood behind her unobserved, reading the writing on which she was engaged:—

‘Leoni has made exertions for my release—I thank him with unmeasured gratitude, although they have proved in vain. I should wish to hear if Jocenus is free—but no tidings of those whom I love and honour, can reach me more. I hear the hammer of the gaol-carpenter nailing up the gallows. The bell gives me warning that a quarter of my last hour has gone. I have been attended by a priest during the two past hours, whose instructions I have not altogether slighted, and to whom I am indebted for writing materials with which to prepare this letter, which he will convey to you. I have one request to make, if you will fulfil it, the unfortunate woman, Myrza, whom I must think of as my mother, is quite destitute

of the means of life ; she has pursued her magical arts without sor-didness—a fact to which, every person who has resorted to her can, I believe, bear witness ; she has endured, and is still enduring, the utmost miseries of a state of want, and is oppressed with a wasting disorder ;—give her for me twenty-five gold marks—'

'Make it a hundred—my child—make it a hundred !' said the merchant, taking the letter from Judith's hand. She started at the sound of her father's voice ; but he read on :—

'I have seen the prior, Judith, it was he who informed me of my doom. We had a long and solemn conversation together, and I challenged him to answer for his conduct in the affair of the confessor before the bar of the Eternal Judge, since in this world he had met with no retribution. He told me that all might have been well for the merchant—very well—and perhaps for myself, if Jocenus had accepted some offer he had made him.'

'Yes, I am afraid,' said the merchant, distressed, 'that I did wrong in refusing the prior—yet to think so would frenzy me ! To think that to save my money I had cast away the life of this foster-son of mine—this youth so long my helper in business—my good companion ; and had lost an opportunity by which Judith might have been secured, and by which my Hebrew brethren in Lincoln might have been redeemed from their present jeopardy—would be an unendurable conviction !' and he strode over the room, with a wild look of self-reproach.

'Father, do not heighten your present distress by casting unnecessary and undeserved blame on yourself ! It was not from avarice you refused the money, but, because you felt doubtful of the prior's word—you thought he would not fulfil the terms he proposed—so I understood you.'

'Right, dear daughter !' exclaimed the merchant, 'it was so. You speak to me comfortably. Yet

events like this, happening just now, seem to accuse me. Gesta *might* have been saved had I acceded to the prior's wish, I shall never cease to think so ; and, Holy father Israel, what a reflection for me ! Perhaps I have no right to blame myself—perhaps I have. I am unhappy at having withheld the money, however, and shall always regret having done so.'

The father and daughter continued their melancholy conversation, and Judith reposed entire confidence in him. Agreeably to the resolution she had formed in his absence, she opened to him the regard she had cherished for Lord Hugh, ever since the latter had interfered for her with the earl. Jocenus did not deride or blame the romance of her sentiments, but entered into them with the gentleness of a man of feeling looking back to the days of his own first love, which had been, he said, the sweetest of his life. Neither did he think her wanting in candour and openness of disposition, because she had kept those sentiments hid from him so long, but considered, an affection so purely ideal, as this she revealed to him, must have been sensitive, shrinking, and retired, in the highest degree.

Never did Judith more love and revere her parent than now, when, disdaining the high pedestal of legitimate parental assumption, which is so often set up in the stead of real paternal dignity, he encouraged her to unfold to his ear, the tale of her heart. She could have been a martyr for him, and her fervid mind could stop short of no sacrifice which was in her power, that might restore to him the least portion of his departed tranquillity. She offered to enter into marriage with Leoni, at whatever hour the merchant chose to appoint ; offered to depart with the former from her beloved bower, and from her father ; and to make herself resigned, if not happy. When Jocenus refused, she returned upon him his own arguments in favour of the union, and yielded her generous suit only when he had

given her a positive and unalterable negative.

They spoke of the deceased son of Lord Hugh, who had now the reputation of a martyr. The merchant observed that the natural interest which Judith would, under any circumstances, have taken in a lovely, lively, intelligent child, like Sir Hugh, had, in the present instance, not only been heightened by a proper sense of gratitude and esteem for the parent of the child, but also by a peculiar and imaginative partiality for the latter. This having been the case, the report that she had slain the child acquired an aggravated bitterness; and the evident fact that Lord Hugh, for whose sake his child had been so loved, believed the report, was the greatest of all imaginable hardships.

'This is what I feel so much, father,' said Judith; 'and, but for you, I should at once give myself up openly to Lord Hugh, and say to him, Here am I, my lord, to suffer ordeal or death! If you think my heart so foul as to have devised harm to your son—if you think my eyes have looked, and looked with pleasure, on the dying agonies of Sir Hugh, stretched on a cross, dyed with his blood—if you think my ears have heard his cries for mercy, and my soul remained impenetrable to the appeal—here am I, my lord, do with me as you list! The gallows, the stake, shall not affright me! Lord Hugh believes me guilty—and malice can inflict little greater suffering.'

The letter of the Lady Isabella was read by the merchant aloud, at dinner, when Judith, Leoni, Caleb, and Keturah were present. Leoni was now inseparable from Jocenus, neglecting his own affairs to serve his distressed friend; Caleb and Keturah had proved themselves to be worthy the highest confidence; and it was with considerations such as these that the merchant had drawn them together to hear the letter. The preference shown to Caleb and Keturah excited no jealousy among the other domestics of

the house, the one being looked upon by them as of superior birth and education, and the other, as having been so long in the family that he was entitled to particular esteem, especially as he was now the main prop of the business. Lady Isabella's letter:—

'I have pleasure, young Hebrew lady, in restoring to you, who know how to value her, an affectionate and faithful handmaid. Though you are by birth and education unfriendly to the true faith, opposed to Him to whom all the Jewish promises, sacrifices, and types have pointed since the days of Abraham, I hope you will see your error, and that I shall have the happiness of welcoming you into the fold of Christ, with open arms. In the present alarming state of your temporal affairs, it may be some consolation to you to be assured, that I believe you as innocent as myself of any act of cruelty. I cannot enter at length into the particulars I have learnt since I left your house. I do not think the prior destroyed the child, nor do I think him guiltless in the affair. It is my belief the child fell by accident into the well in your garden, and how the wounds were made on his hands and feet, and for what purpose, I leave to your conjectures. In writing this I am putting my reputation and life in your power, for the enemies of my brother would not spare me if they discovered me in a correspondence with you. I should be attainted for heresy and treason to the church. But I trust that you, having read this epistle, and having given it to the merchant to read, will not fail to destroy it by fire at the earliest convenient moment. If you can hide yourself in some secure place until the middle of next month, you may perhaps have not much difficulty in escaping the threatening danger altogether; at that time, as I am informed for certain, when the prior sits in council with the distinguished men of our day, and the confirmation of his abbatial pretensions are discussed, a certain priest will oppose his flagrant crimes in respect to the Gants. I have no reason to suppose that anything will be elicited tending to clear you, but I would hope that, as the prior is your chief accuser, his brethren, when his true character is discovered, will delay their angry designs against you until deeper inquiries have been prosecuted. To advance this end, I purpose having an interview with the legate, who is completely ruling in the bishop's palace, with the prince, and the lord-sheriff of our county. The deformed young man, your cousin, is dead, I am given to understand. I assure you I made efforts for his deliverance, knowing him to have been guiltless of the confessor's death; and I was much shocked when I found my interference for him had been in vain. Let not this event too much damp you. I rejoice to think he had with him, in his last hours, a godly priest, to whose

instructions he paid much attention. The countess died this morning of a broken heart; she suffered much from her husband, even at the final close of her life, but expressed the utmost forgiveness for him, and closed her eyes with resignation and peace.

'I am half asleep, having been up all night, and therefore you must excuse me saying more. I am going to matin-prayers before I endeavour to make up for my last night's watching, and must ask of you if I shall remember you before the altar of Jesus? To your household I would be commended. I wish them grace to acknowledge the Messiah, temporal happiness, and all security. Your father may believe me sincere when I assure him that all which I can do to save him and his daughter from injustice I will do: and he may believe me, too, when I say that, to do so, will require much hardihood, which I shall despise, not for the sake of the Jews, or their unbelief, but at the call of duty. Desire him from me not to harden himself against the Light of the World, because of the evil doings of men professing his name. 'All are not Israel that are of Israel,' he will confess. Heaven protect and bless you, my dear young lady! prays the poor friend of RIGHT,

'ISABELLA.'

In a postscript was added these words:—

'To-morrow I shall send my page to you for an acknowledgment of this letter, that I may feel satisfied your hand-maid reached you in safety. You may have more time to pen a communication than I possess at present, and I know you have more freedom in expressing yourself, therefore pray let me have a long letter, in which open to me your circumstances as to a real friend, and tell me what you would have me do for you. Be clear and explicit, and depend upon my exertions. You have inspired me with an unaccountable liking for you; and to redeem you from infidelity and misfortune, and to bring you into intimate companionship with myself, that I might freely converse with you, hear your enchanting harp, and your scarcely less enchanting poetry of sentiment, I could give up title and fortune, live in a simple hut all the remainder of my days, make bread and water my only fare, and coarse serge my only garment.'

The merchant, of course, paid little attention to Lady Isabella's religious allusions, but to Judith they sounded like echoes of her mother's words, and she could not, therefore, overlook or condemn them. Jocenus was struck, however, with that silent religion which pleaded so forcibly and eloquently in Lady Isabella's actions. To hazard so much as she was willing to hazard, nay, as she *had* hazarded,

merely to preserve from unjust treatment a few Hebrews, whom the world would applaud her for assisting to destroy, argued, he said, a principle derived from no polluted source, and nearly allied, at least, to the divine.

Keturah blushed, and looked quite gratified on hearing the mention of her in the letter. Unawares, she stole a glance at Leoni, who, chancing to detect it, ever after entertained the notion that she was partial to him, a proof that his self-confidence had suffered little from the check which Judith had given it.

'I expect, Keturah,' said he, 'that you will now turn Christian, as this Christian lady speaks so graciously of you, and then, according to the laws of your new profession, we miserable Jews shall be deserted by you, and you will carry your amiableness, and your affectionateness, of which this lady has so lofty an opinion, into the houses of Nazarenes.'

'There are more unlikely changes in the world than that, master Leoni.'

'I think not,' said Leoni; 'you would not like, when it came to the last, to forsake your friends of the synagogue for hypocrites of the cathedral.'

'I don't know, master Leoni,' said Keturah; 'such hypocrites as Lady Isabella I like very well.'

Leoni replied with equal spirit; and, but for the gravity which danger, and the recent loss of Gesta, had settled in the house, the repartees, retorts, and sallies of humour between the two would have been, on this occasion, highly amusing; and, as it was, they were with difficulty restrained.

'I myself thought,' said Jocenus, pondering over the letter, 'when you, daughter, told me that Lord Hugh had heard Sylvio howling over the well, and had seen some substance at the bottom of it, that the boy had fallen in there, as he was going from our residence. Conversation with Caleb strengthened that idea in my mind. You will not

forget either what Keturah has said, that, just after Sir Hugh wished her good-night, at the terrace porch, the hound followed, and trotted down the garden path.'

Here Judith patted the greyhound and exclaimed, 'O Sylvio, that you had a voice to speak! how soon you might clear up this mystery!'

Sylvio, seeming to understand his mistress' care, gave a mournful whine, and a single bark.

'Holy father Israel!' broke out Jocenus looking at the letter, 'what a deliberate man of blood is this prior! I see, my child, I see friend Leoni, more now than I did before. Caleb has said that he saw the prior hiding in our garden on the evening of Sir Hugh's last visit, shortly after the boy had gone. Now, supposing that Hugh fell into the well, and was drowned, the prior might have taken him out by some means unknown to us, and have at once determined to lay his death upon us, making himself sure of his mark by piercing the limbs as though we had crucified the child, well knowing that the populace would catch at the least suspicion of our having done such a deed, and be as madmen let loose.'

'What could have been his motive,' said Leoni, 'for so infernal a design?'

'Revenge and covetousness!' replied Jocenus; 'for, putting together what he has said unto me, and what I have heard elsewhere, I discover that he requires money, and no indifferent sum, to secure his seat in his new abbacy. He must not only bribe the legate, and that Italian prelate I named to you, whose relationship with the pope gives him interest at the court of Rome, but the king also. Mark me friend Leoni, the prior is not a man to be stopped in his onward progress by common difficulties. Lack of money is his chief difficulty now, and he sees no other way but ruining me, to obtain the weight of gold he wants.'

'But what meant his offer to you, supposing him to have been sincere,

can your sagacity tell me that, merchant?' asked Leoni.

'I do not understand you,' said the merchant.

'Why, surely, four thousand zechins would not have been sufficient to satisfy the three harpies you have named,' said Leoni. 'Might he not as well have demanded ten thousand? If four thousand would have served his turn, and have freed you and Judith—I would have given it myself.'

'It is a vast sum, though, friend Leoni, let me tell you. Consider how scarce and dear money is now. You have just come into wealth not of your own gleanings, therefore you do not look so sharply at the tale and the weight, young friend, as I who have won all I have by wear of the brain.'

'I have to pay King Henry a very disagreeable composition, however,' said Leoni, 'for leave to possess my inheritance. Ten Flemish horses, saddled and bridled, and as many suits of armour, as well as an expensive annual tribute. By our law, I have need to look sharp to both tale and weight if I would gain and not lose!'

'You are a clever and thrifty jeweller, on the whole, Leoni; you make sometimes larger profits of your jewels than I; but you will look more to gold and silver's current worth as years advance on you. Let another twenty years come on you, you will not talk slightly of four thousand zechins, friend Leoni.'

'It is much the same with all commercial people,' said Leoni, carelessly, 'Jews or not Jews.'

'Yes,' said the merchant, musing aloud; 'had my child only sufficient out of what I possess, to maintain her in the same manner she has been maintained, I would willingly, since things are come to such a pass, yield all the rest to the king for his aid and protection. Leoni, think you he durst protect us?'

'I think he durst not, on account of the clergy,' replied Leoni; 'else I think he would, for he is as greedy after money as the pope—more greedy he cannot be.'

'And you would give up all the thrift of your life for me, father?' said Judith, with a tearful smile, 'as dear and scarce as money is, and as sharply as you look after the tale and weight.'

He only replied by a bitter exclamation against himself, for having withheld the zechins from the prior.

In the meantime Caleb's thoughts were not unoccupied with solid matter. He had heard the Lady Isabella's letter, and had seen the seals appended thereto. Having ruminated carefully, he cleared his voice sundry times, and taking advantage of an interval of silence, spoke thus, while he sat shyly and awkwardly as near the door as he could get:—

'My master, Keturah said to me the friar brought master Gesta's letter from the hermit—it may be the hermit sealed it.'

Keturah quickly said 'That she had neglected to tell her mistress that the friar had mentioned that the hermit had sealed it up more securely.'

'Whence could the hermit have got Lord Hugh's seal?' said Jocenus, surprised. Judith recollected that when she was in the Monks-lane, she had felt impressed with the idea, he knew more of the prior than he would say openly. She recalled the fact that he had confessed himself the writer of anonymous notes to Lady Isabella, and that he had avowed himself in possession of important secrets relating to the prior.

Judith having spoken of these circumstances, it was at once conjectured that the hermit was the priest whom Lady Isabella spoke of as intending to expose the prior's conduct in respect to the Gants.

CHAPTER XXI.

'No, my child,' said Jocenus to his daughter, as they were writing, on a subsequent day, in their underground apartments, which by this time looked in all the confusion which extremity of danger had introduced, 'no, we cannot hope to be undiscovered much longer. The

inquiry that has been already made for us will be repeated, we must expect it.'

His countenance was overcast with fear and gloom: Judith, on the contrary, had never appeared more collected. She had hitherto lived in almost boundless luxury and indulgence, which had afforded no scope for the exercise of the stronger and nobler qualities of her character. Her mind had been enervated by too much ease, and her sensibility marred by too much solitary meditation, this was to be altered now. That beautiful sort of selfishness, which her fine imagination had acquired by dwelling too much retired, had now to be shaken off. She was now called upon to make great efforts, both of the active and passive kind; both to do and to endure; both to act and to suffer; and she felt herself, to her own surprise, becoming equal to them.

Her grief for Sir Hugh, was tender and deep; her grief for Gesta, intense to agony. But she controlled her feelings with a firm hand, that she might sustain her father at this arduous period. No more she allowed her fancy to dwell upon the bower she loved. Her favourite rooms, her garden, and the enjoyment of daylight, she gave up; even her harp, also, lest its sweet sound should betray her concealment: and all this was done with a fortitude quite new to her. Her unlimited leisure might have continued as before, but Judith was now roused to true womanly exertion, and hour after hour, and day after day, she wrote Hebrew letters for her father to different rabbis, acquainting them of the danger in which his house was involved, and intreating their interference with influential personages. To other Jews she also wrote from her father's dictation; and Leoni took charge of the letters. But Leoni's house was searched, by the abbot's directions, and the letters seized. No one could make anything of their contents, until the abbot, ever subtle, seized a Jew who had once turned Christian, and

had afterwards proved a knave, and gave him twenty gold marks for translating them orally, before a council of the church, in the chapter-house of the cathedral. As Judith had written in them her father's words, just as they fell from his lips, and as Jocenus had fully trusted that none but persons of his own nation would read them, the letters contained many expressions which were easily to be wrested to an offensive meaning. These, the abbot did not fail to bring forward to the notice of the chapter, when they were set down by a monk according to the Jew's readings. The Jew was occasionally stopped, to afford the abbot time for making comments; and there was scarcely any crime of which at that day it was customary to suspect the Jews, but the abbot drew from these unfortunate letters, proofs that it had been committed by the writers. At the end of the council Judith was declared a sorceress—a murderess—a disseminator of open blasphemy—a heretic, writing against his holy infallibility, the pope—and a traitress to the crown of England.

A proclamation was issued against her, bearing an appalling list of accusations as above, and followed by a string of sounding anathemas against her father, as a partaker and promoter of her crimes. All Hebrews who harboured either the father or daughter, were commanded, on pain of death, to give them up to the secular power.

Judith had written to Lady Isabella, requesting her not to expose herself to any further hazard, thanked her for the great services she had already rendered the merchant and herself, and bade her a final farewell, for, since a correspondence between Lady Isabella and herself must henceforward prove highly dangerous to the former, Judith would not think of allowing it to proceed.

Judith next called together her principal domestics, while her father was engaged in another room, and asked each, in turn, if she could

rely on their faithfulness. 'You know the penalty,' said she, 'if I should be found concealed here and taken prisoner, you will all forfeit your lives.'

Caleb groaned in a kind of surly impatience, and made no other reply but that the merchant wanted him—there were some tissue-cloths to look over—he could not stay; if his young lady thought him unfaithful, she must talk to him at another time.

'Caleb,' said Judith, as he was turning away, 'are you offended?'

'Ah, my young mistress!' was all Caleb's reply: he could not trust his voice to say more. She gave him a look expressive of unlimited trust in him, and he went away. Judith then addressed Keturah, and the rest of the servants.

'Caleb has been a long time with my father; he could not, I believe, exist away from us. Let not his example sway us. Whichever of you feels fearful of adhering to me, I will dismiss, with such presents as shall be most useful to you.'

Keturah, in her impetuous sensibility, threw herself on the neck of her mistress, and wept violently.—'I will never—never—leave you!' she exclaimed: 'if you go to prison, I will go with you! I will suffer with you—I will die with you!'

Judith kissed her, and said—'You shall remain Keturah. Heaven reward you for your fidelity, by many years happiness!'

Belaset was constitutionally timid, her face was very pale, and she could hardly support herself on her seat. She was enduring a distressing conflict between affection for her mistress, and a desire to flee; in misery she waited until, Judith put the question to her.

'And you, Belaset, will you stay with me, and take all risks, or will you go away?'

'I will answer for her,' said Keturah, observing her silence with an angry flush: and speaking emphatically with the hope of infusing courage into her companion; 'she will not think of deserting you—she

cannot—she durst not be so false to her own heart !

'Let Belaset answer for herself,' said Judith. 'Now, Belaset, consider well—be decisive. You have heard the proclamation that has been issued against me? I cannot answer that the next hour will not see me in the power of my relentless, ruthless, persecutors. If you would avoid participating in my doom, your departure must be speedy. I see you shrink. Let me advise you to return to your friends at Sleaford. I will give you six suits of apparel and a hundred gold marks, for a marriage portion. Do not hesitate, my good girl, fearing that I shall look upon you as unkind or less meritorious than those who stay with me. You are naturally less spirited and bold than Keturah, here—but not less kind and true.'

'My dear lady,' said Belaset at last, 'I hardly know how to tell you that I dare not stay; yet I shall never have any peace if I leave you now—if I forsake you in this time of sorrow.'

'I shall never forgive you if you do,' said Keturah.

'Oh, what shall I do!' exclaimed Belaset, wringing her hands, while tears dropped from her eyes; 'my mistress must despise me, when she sees all faithful to her but me—all but me! My master will never pardon me! What—what shall I do!'

'It is a fearful thing to die by violent means, in the full vigour of our lives,' said Judith, shuddering as did also those about her.

'Go, Belaset; Keturah will assist you to prepare for your departure. Do not reproach yourself, but speedily take your leave of us. I will immediately prepare for you the gift I promised, and you have my earnest wishes for your future prosperity.'

Belaset was soon ready for setting out; the grief of the timorous maiden was pitiable. She had taken leave of all but Keturah, who now gave her a cold and contemptuous adieu.

'I need not say take care of yourself,' said Keturah, carelessly, 'I have little fears for you on that head; you will never act so silly a part as to stay in the way of trouble, when you can get out of it.'

Belaset was unable to bear this, she sat down on the steps, and declared herself unable to proceed.

'To part from you, Keturah, in this manner!' she exclaimed, 'from you, whom I have lived with so long!—from you, who have tended my sick bed!—from you, who have ate with me, slept with me, rejoiced with me, wept with me!—To part with you, in this manner, whom I may never see again in the body!'

'I care little,' said Keturah, 'whether you ever see me again, or not. What becomes of me is a matter of perfect indifference, so I may but prove myself faithful to my mistress in her time of sorrow. Some people, when days were bright, could profess much for her, but now the sky lowers, and all is dark around, they forget all their boasted love and duty, and only think of preserving themselves. You are one of such people, Belaset. As for me, I have said to my lady, and I will abide by it, Where thou goest, I will go—where thou lodgest, I will lodge.'

'Keturah, pity her who has been fellow-handmaid with you so long!' said Belaset. 'I would not go if I could avoid it—but I dare not stay. My heart is wild with fear. I should be frantic if I were taken to prison, and endure torture and hanging I *could not*. What I have undergone since I knew the Christians were seeking to injure my master and mistress, and since Gesta was taken away, I could not tell you if I were to talk of it till Elias, whom our nation expect, came from the seven heavens. I have dreamt of terrible pains of body, awful despair of mind—of racks, and thumb-screws—of having my feet and hands cut off, my eyes plucked out, my tongue torn from my mouth, of red-hot bars, of scourges, of fire, and of having my ashes scattered to the

winds. I would not live over again the last month for any thing that could be offered to me—I dare not stay.'

'But why do you linger here?' said Keturah, seeing that Belaset still remained leaning her head against the wall, and showed no signs of moving: 'is there anything more you want? One of the men has taken your bundle into the court and there he waits for you, with your master Gesta's mule, which your lady has given you.'

'I have not deserved her favours,' cried Belaset, now rising and going slowly up the steps; 'never was there such a mistress.'

'Here is a keepsake from me, too,' said Keturah, handing her up a scarf she had herself embroidered. Belaset took it, and said in fervent tones, 'I will keep it for your sake—I will keep it, Keturah—as long as I live. Farewell. We have spent many happy days together—they are gone now!'

'You will not be destitute, Belaset,' said Keturah, who was fast beginning to melt with sorrow, and had already lost her ire: 'that will be a consoling thought for me when you have left me.'

Keturah sprang up the steps, and embraced her friend with laments bitter and unaffected. They hung upon each other for some minutes, and parted with equal anguish.

'She has gone then,' said Judith to Keturah, as the latter entered the sitting room.

'Yes, my lady,' replied Keturah, sighing; 'yet the foolish girl will suffer more away than she would have suffered had she remained. She is only a coward when she is expecting pain—she can meet it as firmly as any one.'

'That I believe,' said Judith; 'and, indeed, Keturah, we have had proofs that she can. You remember instances of her courage, I dare say; once, you know, when the surgeon had to lance the abscess in her side, how she trembled and fainted at the idea, and yet bore the operation without

hardly wincing, and even smiled under it. She has had a great dread of death ever since I knew her, yet perhaps, when that really comes to her, she will sustain the shock with all the strength that might be expected to belong to a stronger nature. Poor Belaset! I feel much pity for her. I know full well that she will suffer grievously while parted from us. But now, Keturah, I must give you a mission from me to Leoni; endeavour to see him; place this purse in his hand, and tell him it is for the wretched mother of Gesta; if he can contrive to have it safely conveyed to her he will do me a kindness.'

'Leoni is in the house, my lady,' said Keturah, 'as Belaset was parting from me he passed us in the hall.'

'Then step up to him,' said Judith, 'and bring word directly if he takes charge of the money, and what he says.'

Keturah went, and presently returned with an assurance from Leoni that he would undertake to convey the purse to Myrza with his own hand; and, therefore, if it did not reach her safely it must be only because some accident had happened to him.

'If it had been prudent to have done so,' said Judith, 'I should have endeavoured to see the poor woman myself—it would have gratified me exceedingly; but I must submit to the necessity which keeps me a voluntary prisoner here, I suppose.'

In the meantime, terrible had been the excitement in the city. The legate had given orders for a gold shrine to be erected over the remains of Sir Hugh, in the minster and upon it was to be laid an image of the boy, covered with thin gold. Watch-monks guarded the body night and day! incense and tapers were constantly burning around it, and the legate was the first to kneel to it in open worship; his train, a numerous and splendid band, also bent in lowly mien on the chequered marble pavement. Little would

the playful boy, in his brief lifetime, have anticipated such honours!

The notes of a pompous requiem arose from the minster choir in grand choral swells, then sank gradually into a soft and mournful chaunt; again the organ swelled, and the fabric was filled with volumes of majestic sounds, while in long procession, the monks of the cathedral passed along the extensive nave, and the great transept.

The new abbot of Crowland had visited his abbey, and now he had come therefrom, at the head of a goodly number of priests and prelates. He found the streets in a tumult, as he had expected; and when near the minster he checked his horse, and addressed the populace, without preface, in this strain—

'How is it, children of the holy church, liegemen of the pope, and of the mother of God—how is it, I ask, that you remain thus collected together like people moonstruck, or under the force of enchantment? Have the Jews wronged you again?'

'Holy abbot,' said a friar on foot, near his horse, 'thou thyself didst inform them of Sir Hugh's crucifixion.'

'Hold thy peace,' said the abbot to him, in a subdued voice; then again speaking aloud, and throwing up his arm above his head, he cried to the agitated multitude—

'You wait until the secular arm of Justice shall reach these blood-thirsty infidels; but I absolve you all, in the name, and by the authority of Saint Hugh, and the Virgin Mary, from waiting longer for the movements of that tardy emissary. Go, search the Jews' houses for yourselves. Seek the fair sorceress and her father, who have injured you—bring them to the chapter-house of the cathedral before me and the legate of Rome, there you shall have immediate justice, and there the honour of the church, and the safety of her children's households shall be secured.'

A yell of anticipated revenge ran through the air; thousands were

preparing to rush to the Jews' quarter, when the abbot sets spurs to his horse, and rode beyond the thickest parts of the crowd with uplifted arm; then reining up, exclaimed—

'Stop!—stop!' His commanding mien, and the power of his voice, acted upon the people with irresistible influence.

'Silence! silence! let us hear what the lord abbot would have us do,' cried some voices.

'Yes, yes,' shouted others, 'we will do as he says, whatever it be! he takes an interest in us now; he knows the pope's pleasure; he is hand in hand with the cardinal of Canterbury, and with the legate; we will do as he wishes, he will lead us right!'

'By this time,' exclaimed the abbot, 'the Jew-merchant Jocenius, and his daughter, may, for aught you know, have escaped the country, and taken sanctuary in some other land! How is it you have been so tardy in securing them? Were the people of York no more on the alert lately? What! will you have your children massacred in mockery of the Son of God? and let the blasphemous perpetrators of such deeds escape you? Is it not enough that your coin has been shamefully cut and injured by these intruders into our nation?—is it not enough that your gains are crossed and prevented by them? Is it not enough that they make you poor—that they spread magic among you—that they disseminate poisonous heresy, and the unpardonable sin, like the plague in your houses? Where is your zeal for the holy see? I charge you bring forward to punishment this merchant's daughter, himself, and all his household, before another setting of the sun!'

'It shall be done!' was the answer which burst forth on every hand, 'it shall be done, lord abbot, if we raze every Jew's house to the ground in our search for them!' Again he waved his hand, again he was listened to as an oracle:—

'I go now to the shrine of this young martyr; he appeared to me

last night in a vision, and informed me that if his murderers were brought to their death in a lawful way of punishment, miracles would be freely performed at his tomb.' The abbot stopped an instant to see what effect this intelligence produced; that effect was exactly such as he wished. The populace were in a mood to believe anything—do anything. He found it an easy matter to sway them exactly to his will. He went on—

'As from the martyred saint himself, therefore, have I spoken to you all; and now, further, lay not a finger on the wealth of the Jews, while you are searching for those who have committed this accursed crime. Soldiers, whom I see yonder under the guidance of Garston, advance, and go with the people. Those who attempt to seize any of the wealth in the houses of the infidels, cut down to the earth, in the name of young Saint Hugh! I am commissioned by him to give absolution of all offences to those who assist in the performance of his will on this occasion; and, as I told you, the safe delivery of his murderers to justice will be followed by the performance of miracles at his tomb; but, those who dare, unauthorised, to injure the guilty persons, or to touch the polluted treasure of their houses, will be visited with diseases and other dreadful evils. If the people do not swallow that as eagerly as I would have them, I know nothing of their tempers,' added the abbot, aside, biting his under lip with a contemptuous smile. 'I have raised a spirit among them now which I defy all the exorcists of the land to banish before it has fulfilled my purposes. Nothing answers like asserting a commission from the invisible world, they would follow one who pretends to that, hoodwinked, into the Red Sea. No—no—they must not touch the precious jewels which these Hebrews possess, or their coffers of gold and silver, *until* I have had the reaping of such a noble harvest, after that they shall glean the residue; for I must not

have the king, or the prince, or the justiciary; no, nor even the legate, or the earl, fall upon a booty which must be mine alone. Garston is in my interests—he will play his part cunningly, I have no doubt; and, guiding the fiery people, without seeming to do so, are some priests and friars, my own sworn servants—I can depend upon them, for they are bound to obey me, by the strongest of all instincts—self-preservation. The lives of several of them depend upon my breath; they have committed crimes, from the consequences of which I am their potent and only defender.'

His eye ranged among the crowds now fast hurrying to the Jews quarter. There was a wavy sea of heads as far as he could see on every side. Whilst he kept his horse still, some curious scenes were enacted by him. A poor emaciated cripple, who had seized upon the hope of having a miracle performed in his favour at the shrine of Sir Hugh.

'Miracles! I should like to hear of a miracle which would make a hard and bad heart what it ought to be!' exclaimed an indignant voice which proceeded from that hostelry-keeper, who, on the evening of the great banquet, had had his wife forcibly taken from his house. The abbot bent a frowning look on Richard, who was a powerful man. A quarter-staff was in his right hand, and his appearance betokened no inaptitude for the use of it. A vengeful gloom was settled on his lowering eyebrows, from which the stoutest hearted might have recoiled without any imputation of cowardice.

'Come on, and help us to find the 'Jew's Daughter,' Dick,' said a begrimed blacksmith, with bare arms, and a most forbidding countenance, 'and afterwards I'll make one with you to force the earl to give you back your Margery.'

'To the devil with you! Margery may stop where she is,' returned the hostelry-keeper, elbowing his way in an opposite direction from that in which the crowd were going.

'There goes one,' said the abbot to himself, looking after Richard, whom no man, a jot less foolish than the earl, would have wounded in so incurable a manner, and have suffered to remain at large. He trusts his present thoughts to no one, I would wager all the relics worshipped in Christendom; and for why? that he may not be robbed of his sweet revenge upon the earl. It was he, I am well convinced, who sent in the poisoned fruit to the earl. The second experiment of that kind he makes will be more successful, no doubt. It may be so, for aught that I shall do to prevent it. Some of my most important secrets might be safer were the earl in purgatory.'

Here he set forward after his party, whom he rejoined at the minster gates. The legate and his friends were issuing out at the south gateway, nearest the palace, as the abbot, having dismounted, entered at the west, opposite the castle. The latter, with due ceremony, advanced to the shrine, and laying his hand upon it, invoked the spirit of the boy in a grave, sustained tone, which had a remarkably solemn effect in that place of many echoes. Perhaps the confidence with which he spoke, was greatly assisted by the sight of several curious gems, which had been already brought to the tomb as votive offerings. A gold cup of superb workmanship, enclosed the heart of Sir Hugh, and stood on the shrine, glittering with precious stones. The eyes of the kneeling pilgrims were fastened for the most part on this gold cup, over which drooped the rich fringe of the canopy hung above.

The abbot's invocation to Saint Hugh, was principally to implore his aid in the search that was being made for the Hebrews who had slain his mortal body, and concluded thus:—

'Therefore, most holy and blessed martyr, seeing thou hast deigned to appear to thy servant in a vision, under thy present form of celestial beatitude, and hast signified to him

thy will and pleasure, which, according to thy command, he has made known without delay to the people at large, be propitious to them; and when the guilty shall have perished, let works of healing be manifested here for the glory of God, the Virgin, and thee, and to the honour of the church.'

Having thus spoken, he bent down before the tomb, and remained in silence for some time. But his thoughts were not occupied with prayer. He was too entirely engrossed with the affairs of this world for those of the other to weigh much upon his soul. He had taken some bold and hazardous measures to obtain his present preferment, but all were of no essential service, unless supported now by others equally bold and hazardous. The suspicion and dislike which was generally entertained against him, he had found no other way of combating successfully, but by means of this pretence of a vision, which, as no one durst deny, because no one could prove it false, was sure to serve his turn exactly. It gave him a sudden importance in the eyes of the lay people, and his voice was obeyed as paramount among them. He all at once rose to a high pitch of popularity among the clergy also, who crowded round the new star—who worshipped the rising sun. He had broken from the obscurity in which he had been hid, he was making himself felt, and heard, and seen, and admired, and more than ever feared. But the fear he inspired now, was of another kind from that he had inspired before his elevation. Then, he had been feared simply as a bad man, promoting evil of which no one could measure the extent. But now he essayed to dazzle like a second Thomas-a-Becket, all his bad schemes were forgotten, thousands of partizans were ready to smooth his way to the high places of the church and court, and the fear entertained of him, assisted his objects, instead of retarding them, by making them wary of opposing him, and by inducing them to view him through an exaggerated medium.

While he continued kneeling, he was seen to shudder by those nearest to his person. A dismal thought had shot across his mind ; Thomas-a-Becket had perished in the reign of king Henry's grandfather, before the altar of his cathedral ; 'What,' thought the abbot, 'if some of the friends of the merchant, Jocenus, should take such an opportunity as the present to put a period to my existence !' The terror of the thought brought cold drops of perspiration on his forehead, and when he rose, he glanced with suspicious looks on all those who stood around him, and almost expected to see the deadly faces of armed Israelites beneath the cowls of the monks.

When he was about to leave the cathedral, a new party came into the nave, which is the largest open space in the building, and is entered from the main west entrance. A few attendants only, accompanied the bishop of Lincoln, and Lord Hugh de Gant. At the sight of those two dreaded personages, advancing side by side, the abbot felt a shock of apprehension that took deeper root than that which he had a little before experienced ; yet he seemed instantly firm and collected, and awaited the approach of the crusader and Groteste with intent to address them, that, from their answers, he might judge what was the nature of their sentiments towards him as abbot.

The knight, without looking at him, walked to his young son's tomb, and knelt close to it, with heavy sighs ; but the bishop went with a quick step, to the new superior of Crowland Abbey—

'How now, prior of Icanno ! how now !' he exclaimed, in indignant accents. 'Why come you here into my church, without my leave, wearing richer trappings on your body than grace in your soul ? Go to—go to—return to your priory, and when I ask your presence here, I will send for you.'

'What, proud bishop !' retorted the abbot ; 'you think it is enough that one Suffolk peasant in a cen-

tury, should be raised out of the dust, to enjoy a healthy see. But suppose you not, that the pope is capable of raising *two* as well as *one* ? Perhaps you think he has not the right—such an opinion would be well worthy of you—your heresy is more than suspected abroad.'

'The pope has not raised you, prior—the pope *will* not raise you ! I can answer for him in that matter. So go back, man, to your monastery, and see you look well to the ways of the brethren in it.'

'My lord bishop,' said the prior of Crowland, 'pardon my boldness in answering for another ; I wish to make peace between my lord abbot and you. The abbot has been duly elected in our abbey, by the recommendation of the legate of his holiness seconded by the convent of Canterbury, and his magnificence the king.'

'Ha—the king, said you ?' cried the bishop ; 'has he too made you an abbot, prior ? That must have cost you some peter-pence now.'

'What mean you ?' said the abbot, his lips whitening with rage.

'I mean, that if thou art an abbot, thou hast not obtained the dignity for thy parts, thy learning, or thy virtues. In other words, thou hast *bought* it.'

This was a home stroke, and the abbot found himself totally at a loss for words to reply to it. The plain expression of the truth he was so little accustomed to, that it quite embarrassed him. Those who were with him looked to him for bold reply to the bishop, and when they saw him standing as one struck dumb by the power of conscience, they were surprised.

'Art thou fit for the cure of souls in a large diocese, who has taken no care of thy own ? resumed Groteste. 'Canst thou exhort the people to confess to thee, and repent, whilst thou thyself hast a breast full of sins unconfessed, and unrepented of ? Be assured, man, that, as an abbot, thou shalt not enter my church after this time. I have serious things to say against thee, and

if thou dost persist in bringing a polluted mitre hither to this consecrated place, three days shall not pass before I publicly proclaim what thou art, and six days shall not pass before thou art excommunicated. I have had sorrow of late from enemies without and within my diocese, but the bishop is bishop still, and if he lift his voice to suspend thee, who will say him nay?

This brought forward to the assistance of the abbot several prelates and inferior priests, who replied in warm language.

'A clamour like this,' said the bishop, 'is not to be borne on this holy ground. Some of you know I am not given to idle threatenings, therefore hear me with attention. This man, who, when I last saw him, was the prior of a poor monastery, and a very sorry prior too, a man of ill reputation, and loose life, shall never enter this church again while I am bishop, except he comes in his proper guise, as a prior, and nothing more; and if he persists in maintaining the name and outside show of an abbot, I will excommunicate him, and those who have abetted him, also shall feel the force of my spiritual weapons.'

Thus the abbot was almost turned out from the cathedral, which he left burning with vindictive feelings. Opposite the gate he was met by the Earl of Lincoln, and a numerous body of barons. The earl getting down from his saddle, bent his right knee to the ground before the abbot, and then conducted him with considerable ceremony into the castle.

Here a host of persons gathered about the abbot in the court. Having recovered his presence of mind perfectly, he made himself as agreeable to them as he could, and, entering a state apartment of the keep, partook of a handsome repast.

'Hark!' he exclaimed, dropping some figs which he had been in the act of lifting to his mouth, 'are not those sounds which we hear, the shouts of the people?'

'Yea, by St. Dennis of France!' cried the earl, going to a narrow

slit in the wall, which served for a window, and listening. 'The Jewish dog and his daughter must be taken.' The abbot arose and joined him. The tops of the houses of the Jews quarter only could be discerned from this gloomy opening by which they stood, therefore nothing could be seen of the movements of the multitude, but their tumultuous and fierce cries rose distinctly on the wind, yet could neither the abbot or the earl determine whether they were cries of exultation, or of threatening.

'Hillah-hoo-oo!' shouted the earl, tramping over the bare stone floor, and whirling his naked sword; 'I could fancy myself in a merry siege now. By St. Dennis, you shouts fire me! Hillah-hoo for St. George! Hillah for a Lincoln! Ha, ha, ha! —Give us a jack of malmsey, squire.'

An esquire served the rough baron. After one of his prodigious draughts, he stopped to take breath, sitting down on a high-backed, square cut, leathern arm-chair, and throwing out his iron-cased legs with a clattering noise.

The abbot remained by the loophole, listening with unbroken attention. The apartment was a very different one from such as might be imagined by persons not familiar with the character of fortified dwellings of the feudal ages. It was a state room, because the governor of the castle occupied it, but it had all the aspect of a dungeon. Two slits, not a hand in width on the inside, admitted only just as much light as served to make 'darkness visible.' The ceiling was in dark shadow without relief, and the floor cheerless. The furniture was massive, of black oak. Kite-shaped shields, breast-plates, double-edged swords, and other arms, hung promiscuously on the walls. The tables were stained with wine, and numerous cups and flagons were on them.

On a square broad seat, a sort of couch, covered with leather, rested a pale, sickly boy, in a half-sitting, half-lying position. His legs were contracted so much, and were so

twisted from their proper shape, that he was totally unable to walk, and his body was so wasted, that it was manifest to every one but his grandfather, the earl, that his life could not be prolonged many months at most. He leaned upon one elbow, and his blue eyes, already misty with the shadows of the grave, frequently dropped a large tear on his point lace collar.

'How art thou, boy Gervase—how art?' enquired the earl, presently going to him and touching his flaxen locks with his gauntleted hand, anxiously and affectionately. 'What does the young knave fret for? Weeping—weeping—Gervase, whenever I see thee. What dost weep for? Thou makest me angry, boy, thou dost. Art thou not my heir?—am I not thy grandfather? Come, come, sirrah Gervase, drink a cup of good wine, and no more crying. Away with tears I say—I will have no more of them!' saying this, he handed a brimming goblet to the lips of the boy, who rejected it with signs of disgust.

'Well—an thou wilt be a fool, thou must be a fool!' said the earl, throwing the liquor and cup on the ground, and turning away from this only object of his affections with a frown. But he returned to Gervase again, in less than a minute, swearing hoarsely, and yet uneasy. A string was round his grandchild's wrist, which held a falcon from taking flight, that was perched on a small rail fastened above the couch on the wall. Instead of looking at the earl, he pulled the string, and, when the hawk flew down, took it to his bosom and wept over it.

'Body of me! what is all this for?' exclaimed the earl; 'tell me why you make this peevish noise; what makes you spoil that falcon with your baby fondlings? Montjoye St. Dennis! thou art twelve years old, and my heir. I'll not bear it, boy Gervase! I will not bear it! let the hawk go to the perch!'

'No—no, grandfather, it was my dear grandmother's falcon, let him stay, let him stay,' entreated the

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boy. 'My grandmother is dead, that is why I weep;' and he threw his arms over his eyes, and his heart seemed breaking with the greatness of his grief. The earl was struck; he stood silent awhile, then muttering a curse, turned away to the abbot, who, in an attitude of expectation and excitement, still listened to the noise which arose every few minutes from the Jews quarter.

CHAPTER XXII.

'AND you have sent the Lady Isabella from me,' complained the orphan boy, all at once addressing his grandfather aloud.

'What a pestilence wantest thou of that crabbed dame here?' said the earl. 'Sent her away! aye, marry, it was high time, when she plotted with my foolish wife to let the Jew loose. Yet, if thou wilt have her with thee, though I hate her as the devil hates holy water, have her, and dry thy eyes—with a murrian to thee!'

'Shall I send my page for her, grandsire?' said the boy eagerly; the earl made no answer, and Gervase took his assent for granted. A youth, perhaps two or three years older than himself, was dispatched with a whisper to the palace of the bishop. When this was done, the face of the earl's grandson began to exhibit a faint gleam of returning cheerfulness, and a leech, named Aaron, entered the room softly, and inquired into the state of his young patient's health, with a soft, hypocritical voice. The man of drugs, who was a Hebrew (the same who had been paid by the abbot to translate the letters of Judith) beckoned the earl into a dark and narrow gallery outside the room, and said—

'My lord—my very good patron—I am sorry to have to inform you that the young baron, Sir Gervase, is—'

'Pestilence and furies! thou bearded dog!' exclaimed the earl, dreading to hear the conclusion of the speech of the servile Jew. 'If thou dost not cure him, thou shalt be hanged! Look out here, what seest thou?'

Grasping the arm of the shrinking Israelite the earl drew him to a loophole, from which could be seen a gallows, by which the governor of the fortress was accustomed to bestow summary punishment on whomsoever, of inferior rank in his castellany, his displeasure happened to fall. The shuddering leech fixed his eye on the pendent corpse of a vassal of the arbitrary baron, which was allowed to swing from the gallows as a warning and a terror to his associates, until, perchance, another unfortunate individual should be compelled to supply his place.

'Dare not to tell me my Gervase will die!' muttered the baron, compressing with his hand the bony arm he held until the leech cried out with pain. 'That would be an ill hour for thee in which I lost all hope of his recovery!'

The leech wisely held his peace after this threat, and refrained from saying, as he had intended, that Sir Gervase was *fast* declining. The earl paced the gallery several times. He was miserable; for though he would not learn the truth that there was no hope of the boy's restoration, yet he could no avoid receiving ill tidings, instead of hopeful ones, from the countenance of the leech.

'Hark you, Aaron,' said he, turning with a less alarming manner to the Jew, 'if you will cure Gervase I will be a friend to you as long as I live. Knowest thou not of some powder from eastern countries—some curious mixture which might do him good? Thy people are learned in physics—hast thou sought among them for some healing potion that might answer? I will give protection for life, limbs, and property, to any Jew who will make him well.'

The leech seemed to meditate, putting his finger to his forehead as if some important thought had struck him.

'I will make inquiries,' said he; 'I may meet with something. If you choose, I will go directly to some of my brethren,' and he was stepping toward the door, when the earl stopped him.

'No—little Aaron—not so fast—not so fast. Cunning as thou art, I am as cunning as thou, if I let thee go now, thou wouldst be in no haste to come back to the neighbourhood of yonder gallows:—ha—ha!'

The leech was ready to drop when he found that he was not allowed to quit the castle, for he knew that he could send to no one who could supply him with a medicine likely to be of service; moreover, he felt quite sure that Gervase would die very shortly, and he did not doubt but that he should really be hung for having failed to cure him.

'I do assure you, my lord baron,' said he, in a supplicating tone, 'I have done all that leech could do for your grandson. Some persons must die young—it is their fate—and when one is destined to die no physics in the world can prevent it.'

'Just so,' said the earl; 'and every one may tell by thy visage that thou art destined to be hanged—it is written on thy face. Body of me! I saw it there as soon as ever you begun to hint at Gervase dying.'

'There is one thing I must say, if my lord baron will have patience,' said the trembling Aaron, as a project for escaping occurred to him, 'Sir Gervase should be crossed in nothing.'

'Then let him be crossed in nothing,' exclaimed the earl.

The Jew soon after returned to his patient, and taking a favourable opportunity, whispered to him—

'Dear Sir Gervase, I hope the medicines I have ministered to you to-day have been less nauseous than those you drank yesterday.'

'I don't know,' said the boy, languidly turning away from the leech with dislike; 'they have all been bad enough. I wish you would let me alone, to die in peace.'

'Ah, my dear Sir Gervase,' cried Aaron, 'I hope you are very far from any thought of dying yet!—you really must not be so gloomy as to think it possible you will die in this sickness. But if such an im-

probable event *should* happen, I hope you will have no ill-will against me.'

'Not I—I shall not think about you.'

The leech took no notice of the contempt with which these words were spoken, but edged himself closer to the boy, and said—

'You know, though I was born a Jew, I am a Christian like yourself; I kiss the cross and worship the consecrated wafer. I am very partial to the Lady Isabella, too, as you are; and I never forget to join in the masses for that angelic lady, the countess. I assure you I have a great affection for you—I would do anything to pleasure you.'

'Then rid me of you and your medicines,' said Gervase, briefly and sharply.

'Right willing would I be to do so,' said the Jew, in a still softer whisper, 'if, Sir Gervase, you could contrive to send me out of the castle, for it seems I am a prisoner here, and if you should die, I am to be hanged, the earl says, for not having kept you alive.'

When Sir Gervase heard this spoken dolorously, and saw the frightened looks of the leech, he conjured up some heterogeneous images in his fancy, and laughed with the greatest delight for some minutes. The Jew stared at him with surprise, for he would as soon have expected to see the pope turn a Hebrew, as to see the ailing, mourning boy before him laugh so enjoyingly. His beard stuck out stiff, as if set with wires, and his little ferret eyes were round to the largest circumference the socket admitted of; while his lips moved in pique and anger.

'Don't—don't look so oddly, Aaron, or I shall laugh myself to death, and then you will be hung, you know,' said Gervase, still shaking with laughter.

Aaron now pretended to laugh too, but the sense of his perilous situation was too vividly before him.

The boy was presently quite exhausted, and leaned back with closed eyes. The fit of youthful mirth was over.

'Aaron,' said he, in a faint voice taking off from his finger a ruby ring, 'take this, I give it to you. If you use it discreetly it will unlock for you all the gates through which you must pass out of the castle. Show it to the warders who would hinder you from escaping, and say I have sent you on an errand of importance.'

The leech was full of gratitude, he bent down his head to kiss the hand of Gervase, and then hurried to the chamber or cell (for it was nothing more) which he had occupied, to gather together the few articles of raiment belonging to him, and to adjust and fasten his box of medicine. Here he stood perplexed, with his hands behind his back, ruminating.

'I can't but think,' said he, soliloquising, 'that if I carry this box and bundle with me, the surly porter of the keep-postern will suspect that I intend to return no more, and so refuse to let me pass in spite of the ring. It is an awkward affair! To be sure I had rather lose all that is here than run the risk of airing myself night and day on that ugly gallows. Yet—' it was a vexatious alternative which presented itself, leaving them behind was most painful to think of. 'But what then?' said he, glancing to the door; 'if I *must* leave them,' shrugging his shoulders, 'it is but just that I take something in their stead,' and complacency stole over his features.

And now did Aaron move softly as if his feet were shod with felt, out into a narrow corridor, at the end of which was a round staircase, leading up to the fifth story of the keep. He ascended it quickly and lightly, nor stopped a moment until his hand was on the bolt of a carved oaken door, opening into the rooms which had been appropriated to the late countess. He drew the bolt back, and pushed the door a little inward; it creaked violently—and he uttered a suppressed exclamation, not of the most pious description. For a moment he feared the creaking had been heard, and there-

fore stepped aside into the shade. But no one approached. He could distinguish no footsteps but those of the sentinels on the ramparts—no voices but those of the populace of the city, which latter, deadened by the thick walls, was like the roar of a distant sea. Now he ventured softly to pass into the oratory and dressing-closet of the late lady of the castle, and fastened the door behind him.

An inquisitive eye did the Jew cast around, and his ear was equally on the alert. He was particularly attracted by two cabinets, both quaint in shape and workmanship, and raised on curious ebony frames; both had been left unfastened since the decease of the countess.

As a man digging in some solitary and ancient place with the hope of finding money, lights upon some precious board of antiquity with trembling eagerness and joy, so did Aaron pounce upon these cabinets. He threw up both the lids at once, and proceeded to inspect the multifarious trinkets and trifles within, without the smallest scruple.

Upon the floor he threw a number of articles which he deemed unworthy of his regard; but on a chair he placed carefully such as he intended to take away. This esteemed selection was composed of crosses, necklaces, bracelets, rosaries, coronets, chaplets, pearls, rings, clasps, and brooches: and when to these were added a few gold coins of very high value, taken from a secret drawer, Aaron appeared satisfied.

Now commenced a strange operation. From a bag which he wore at his waist he took out a needle, scissors, and thread, and stitched the largest of the trinkets, to which he had a fancy, on the inside of his gaberdine. The rings, brooches and clasps, were wrapped together in a bit of linen, and fastened in the lining of his high cap; lastly, the sewing implements were returned to the bag, and the coins and pearls with them. Thus furnished, the Jew returned to the chamber where his former possessions lay.

'They cut but a sorry figure I must own,' said he, with a shrug and a smile, 'and in the exchange I have made, I have the best of the bargain.'

He suddenly caught up one of his legs with an unpleasant start. A dog that had been much attached to the countess, and was much reputed for its keen sagacity, had followed him unobserved into and from the rooms of his late mistress, and now made a snap at the Jew's leg. Aaron did not at all like this, and seeing the angry display of its fangs, and the fiery look of its eyes, endeavoured to muster up courage enough to coax it; 'poor fellow—fine fellow,' he stammered out, stooping and reaching out his hand cautiously to pat it. But quickly the hand was drawn back again, as the dog gave a deeper and a more threatening growl.

'Tis as big as a lion,' muttered Aaron, wiping his forehead, 'and quite as terrible!—I wish I were on the outside of the door!' But, on the outside of the door the dog was determined he should not be, unless he left the stolen goods behind.

Aaron sought to edge his way out by degrees, but the dangerous animal sat on his haunches in the open doorway, and to pass him seemed impossible. The consternation of the Israelite was at once ludicrous and pitiable. He dared not move—his feet were glued to the floor. His eyes, as if under the influence of fascination, gazed with stupid terror on his adversary. Five minutes, that seemed an age, passed thus, the dog keeping him a prisoner. His knees knocked together. Every moment he expected that some one would be passing outside, and discover his situation, and the theft that he had committed.

'Were the door only shut!' said he in agony.

Before his mind rose the gallows that the earl had shown him. He seemed to feel the hands of the hangman about his neck. At last his fears became so insupportable, that, like one, who, turning giddy

at the edge of the precipice, leaps down into destruction, he made a hasty rush to the door.

In an instant the dog uttered a fierce bark, seized Aaron by the throat, pulled him down, and pinned him with his teeth to the ground. The frightful shriek of the Jew was heard by the earl himself, who had been closeted with the abbot near at hand. Both came to the spot at the same time with several of the earl's retainers.

'Ha—ha,' cried the earl, 'my little leech! cunning Aaron, you are in jeopardy! Hold him fast Wolf—hold him fast, good fellow.'

'For the love of mercy, earl, call him off!'

'Not yet, said the earl, shaking his sides with laughter.

'What made the dog attack you?' inquired the abbot. The retainers pushed their heads forward to hear the reply. Tears of terror and dismay rolled down Aaron's face. He was afraid to answer—he was afraid to remain silent. On either hand was death. Yielding, however, to the most immediate peril, he implored to be relieved from the fangs of the dog, with the most humble entreaties.

'Not till you have replied to the abbot, knave,' said the earl.

'O Lord—call him off! I shall be strangled! He tears my throat!' roared the Jew.

The dog had made a rent in his gaberdine, through which one end of a brilliant cross protruded itself.

'What has he there?' said the abbot, pointing.

'Now it is all over and I am a miserable wretch!' said the Jew mentally. 'There is no hope for me—the gallows will be my fate.'

As soon as ever the dog saw the Earl, his master, bending over the prostrate figure of the leech, and taking hold of the cross, which was one the countess had often worn, it relinquished its hold, and Aaron rose to his knees, with his hand to his throat, from which a few drops of blood were trickling. The earl found the cross so well secured with

thread, that he had some difficulty in detaching it from the gaberdine, and when it came away a piece of garment adhered to it. The additional rent discovered a string of gold beads.

'The secret is told, my lord,' said the abbot; 'he has been stealing from the wardrobe of your lady.'

A great sensation was communicated among the retainers.

'Hither, men of mettle!' cried the earl to them; 'search the rogue to the skin!'

'On my soul I have nothing else!—I have not indeed!' exclaimed Aaron.

'Is this nothing else?—nor this?—nor this?' said the men, as one after another, articles of value were found on his person.

'Fling him over the ramparts!' said the earl.

'No!—no! Spare me!—spare me! Mercy!—mercy!' screamed the poor wretch, as the soldiers were dragging him away. 'Abbot, save me! I can reveal a secret to you—I have not been always what I seem now. Remember the fenman's cottage.'

The abbot looked narrowly at the speaker, and then turning to the earl, said—'I know not to what he alludes, but as he has appealed to me, let him live, earl, until to-morrow.'

The abbot was too powerful now for his requests not to be attended to.

'Thrust the caitiff back into this room then,' said the earl to his retainers, 'and leave Wolf to guard him.'

'Abbot, speak for me!' implored Aaron. 'If I am left alone with the beast I shall be worried! I can tell you something of consequence if you will interfere to save me.'

The abbot stepped into the apartment, and looked round at its solid bare walls.

'It seems to me,' said he, 'there is no outlet here by which the Jew could possibly escape.'

'I swear I will not try to escape,' said Aaron, 'if the dog is not left with me.'

'Who will believe what you swear?' said one of the retainers: 'thou art neither a Christian nor a Jew—thou hast been false to both God and the devil.'

'He will have to stay in purgatory all eternity,' said another; 'for heaven will not receive him, and hell will disdain to have such a turncoat knave.'

Thus were wicked jokes bandied about.

'Now for the chapter-house,' said the abbot, re-entering the room in which he had left his friends. They rose, while the abbot continued, 'I have just received from the legate a letter; he informs me that the justiciary, the sheriff, and himself, are called away to Sleaford, and enclose me a commission from his highness the king, by which I am commanded, and empowered, to act as justice-itinerant for a month in this county—to decide all cases brought before me—with full power of judgment. My first day of sitting will be next Monday.'

Here a messenger entered with the tidings that the Jew and his daughter were taken.

'As the city is in so excited a state,' said the abbot, 'it is, in my opinion, necessary to despatch these guilty persons, with as short a delay as may be deemed consistent with justice.'

'Undoubtedly,' was the reply of a priest: and all assented.

'Short delay—aye—the shorter the better,' said the earl, who felt glad at the prospect of being eased of the bonds he had given Jocenus, without taking any manner of trouble.

'In a secular point of view,' said the abbot, 'I have no right, before Monday next, to act as judge in order to decide the doom of this father and daughter, but as a spiritual judge, commissioned by the young, glorified martyr himself, I have been bold enough to call a chapter of the clergy, whom I here charge, as they dread Saint Hugh's displeasure, to conclude the case this afternoon.'

'This afternoon!' was iterated in surprise.

'At least,' said the abbot, firmly, 'before you dissolve your assembly;' and directly after he led the way to the chapter-house. The bishop being gone to his palace, the abbot attained an easy entrance and took a prominent seat, surrounded by a numerous body of priests, who, excepting two, held benefices inferior to his own. Here we leave him for a while, and return to Judith and her father.

They had clung to that forlorn hope held out to them by Lady Isabella. They longed for time to move more swiftly, and bring on the hour when the hermit should unmask the abbot in public. They pondered the circumstance of the seal, and, catching at probabilities, persuaded themselves that the hermit was in some unknown way connected with Lord Hugh, and that he might be the medium of restoring to them the crusader's friendship.

Their hopes would have been stronger had Judith not kept secret from the merchant her correspondence with the hermit. Had Jocenus known that the hermit, and the Christian teacher of his wife in former days, were one and the same person, an astonishing light would have been thrown on points now obscure, and he would have been able to inform Judith what connection the hermit bore to Lord Hugh. But she had not told her parent that she had received from the pious man her mother's dying letter of Christian entreaties; she had not told him that the hermit, in transmitting to her the letter, had sought to make a convert of her, as he had made a convert of her mother; and her motives for concealment, it might be said, were just and noble. She knew he dreaded the introduction of Christianity into his house as much as the plague; and she was anxious to maintain his tranquillity of mind. He had often described to her the pain and grief he felt when her mother departed from the

Jewish traditions; and how could she bear the thought of inflicting upon him a repetition of that pain—that grief? She was sure that he was quite ignorant of such a letter having being left in trust with her mother's priest; and solely for his happiness' sake she determined, after many an hour of anxious deliberation, to allow him to remain still ignorant of it.

It is dangerous at all times to have studied concealments with the individual appointed by heaven as our nearest guardian and superior. This principle Jocenus had instilled into his daughter's mind.

A mind in love with virtue feels always a natural antipathy to reserves with its dearest friend—and so did the mind of Judith. But yet she could not resolve in this instance to trouble him, especially as she felt that she could give him no sincere assurance that she would turn a deaf ear to the persuasions of the letter, or to the arguments of the hermit.

In the kitchen, on the ground floor, the faithful Keturah and Caleb stood by a lattice that was on the garden side of the house, and conversed with troubled looks on the serious perils in which their beloved master and his daughter were involved.

'I would spend my blood for them,' said Caleb; 'and if they should be taken, and condemned, I shall not outlive them.'

Keturah sighed, and asked him if he thought Leoni would be allowed to remain free. The inquiry was just made when Leoni entered. He greeted the damsel with remarkable kindness, and a deep colour spread over her dark but clear complexion.

'Keturah was asking me as you came in, master Leoni,' said Caleb, 'if I thought the Nazarenes would let you be free.'

'You care a little for *my* safety too, then, do you, Keturah?' said Leoni. She made a hasty and careless answer, but her eye avoided his, and she was a little confused.

Caleb's attention being drawn away, Leoni said to her—

'Keturah, whatever interest you take in me, I take a deeper—a fonder—in you.'

The heart of the listener gave a throb of rapture that was almost pain, yet her eye would have blazed with resentment had not tears quenched the fire.

'Must you needs choose, master Leoni,' said she, 'a time like *this* in which to affront a poor, but proud maiden?'

'Affront you!' he repeated. 'Ah! believe me never heart spoke more sincerely than mine speaks now. Since your lady has been in trouble, I have been much in your society; and, pray forgive me, if I say, I have at times indulged the belief that I was not quite an object of indifference to you. You weep, my dear girl. Where is your lady?'

'In the garden.'

'Come then, let us go to her,' said Leoni, 'she shall speak for me,' and thither he and Keturah went.

'Keturah is related to two of our chief rabbies,' said Judith to Leoni, when she had heard his frank avowal; 'and her education has been unusually good. It is true, she will have only a small dowry, which I shall give her, but her virtues are a fortune in themselves.'

'I seek no other,' said Leoni; 'I have riches sufficient—a good and affectionate wife is all I seek in Keturah.'

'And good and affectionate she is,' said Judith, 'and loves you well—as she will not deny.'

Keturah sunk into her lady's arms, who tenderly embraced her, and united her hand with that of Leoni.

'Here comes my father; he will be as glad as myself of this happy event,' said Judith. Jocenus drew near—his face was clouded and meditative.

'Ah, friend Leoni,' said he, 'I am glad to see you to-day, and I should be still more glad if I could think you incurred no risk in visiting me.'

'Think not of that, Jocenus,' said Leoni, grasping his hand with ardour; 'I have been honoured

with your friendship, and little should I have proved myself worthy of it, if I left you to grapple alone with your present trials.'

'Thanks would ill express my feelings, and I know they would not suit yours,' said Jocenus. 'Your own soul alone can tell you the depth of my gratitude.'

'Say no more—say no more,' said Leoni. 'There is one here who has far outshone me in devotedness to you, and I intend to devote myself to her, for the rest of my life.'

'What is that!' exclaimed Jocenus.

'No more than this—you see before me my wife elect—Keturah, whose chief charm in my eyes, has been her faithfulness to Judith.'

'Is it so!' cried Jocenus. 'Keturah, you are very fortunate. Among all the sons of our outcast nation, not one could be found more worthy of a maiden's hand, than Leoni. And Leoni is fortunate too, for Keturah is an excellent damsel. But is my daughter to lose you, Keturah? If you go from her now, your happiness will prove her sorrow. Depressed as she is, the absence of your attentions, and lively spirits, will be a great loss to her.'

'I entreat you not to consider me,' said Judith. 'To know that Keturah is settled in a secure and happy home, will afford me a pleasure, which will fully compensate me.'

'She shall not leave you,' said Leoni; 'I will not be so selfish as to wish to take her away until you are relieved from your present anxieties.'

'I could not bear to quit my dear mistress,' said Keturah; 'Belaset's going away grieved me enough; and so it was determined, that until the danger now hanging over the heads of Jocenus and Judith should be past, the marriage should not take place.'

In his heart, Jocenus felt chagrined to find that Leoni could so speedily transfer his affections from Judith to Judith's handmaid. Proud, almost to idolatry, of his daughter's

charms, he could not conceive how the man who had once loved her, could love any other women. But he disguised his feelings, or rather smothered them. The eye of filial affection, however, perceived he was shaken.

'We gave ourselves leave to stay an hour in the garden, father,' said Judith, pressing his hand significantly, 'but we have exceeded that limit. Shall we now return to our asylum?'

'Yes, if such is your pleasure, dear child,' replied Jocenus. 'This is the first time, Leoni, that we have seen the daylight for some days, and you will imagine how much we have enjoyed it.'

'Greatly, indeed, I am convinced,' said Leoni, 'and I hope that very soon, the necessity will cease to exist which now compels you to forsake it again.'

The merchant and his daughter left Keturah and her rich and handsome lover walking in the garden. The former descended the steps within the ark, and entered the sitting room.

'Once more thou art in safety,' said Jocenus, folding Judith to his heart, 'and I have my daughter—my precious one—with me still! Every hour that passes over us now, my child, and leaves us still here with each other thus, calls for especial thankfulness. If we have piety but as a grain of mustard-seed, now is the time to make use of it.'

'This is the time indeed,' said Judith, looking up to heaven, and returning her father's tender caresses. 'Happy am I to hear you speak like this—instead of despondingly.'

'If I do not speak despondingly—I feel despondingly,' said Jocenus, starting forward across the room. 'I see no way of ultimate escape for thee—and is not that enough to make my heart despond, though it were framed of iron?'

'Father—dear Father—Leoni has disturbed you,' said Judith.

'I cannot help it if he has,' said

Jocenus, 'I certainly did not think he could so soon have shaken off his love for you, much less have so soon entertained a new passion. If his present choice had been fairer, or wealthier, than my daughter, I might not so much have wondered; but Keturah, however worthy she may be, is not, of course, to be compared with my Judith.'

'You see me with partial eyes, dear father,' said Judith, slightly smiling; 'depend upon it I am not such a paragon as you think. Besides—love, you have often told me, views the object of its tenderness through the beautiful medium of imagination; and, therefore, as Keturah is really very pleasing, Leoni may fancy her an angel for aught we know. To be very serious—I wonder, dear father, you should entertain any surprise at Leoni's rapid change of sentiment; it is just what I should have expected from his character. Did you think he would break his heart, or live pining with grief all his days, because I refused him? Not he. He is like a bird of passage—when one clime grows wintry he seeks another that is blest with sunshine. Yet I must revoke this judgment of him in one instance; can we for a moment forget that he is staying in Lincoln now, merely that he may assist and comfort you, and—'

'Peace, daughter, I am corrected. I wish him happy with Keturah, and thou shalt give her a handsome dowry.'

When the long expected hour of terror arrived—when the house was surrounded by a deceived, enraged, fanatical multitude, determined to find the merchant and his daughter—Judith was asleep in her lamp-lit, subterranean chamber. The harass of mind she had lately endured had begun to affect her health. She had risen that morning with a severe headache, and Jocenus had persuaded her to lie down for a few hours.

Her slumber was broken by Keturah, who stood by her bed, trembling from head to foot. At first the damsel's lips moved with-

out making any articulate sound. Judith raised herself with a palpitating heart.

'Why do you look so fearfully alarmed?' she inquired.

'O my dear lady,' exclaimed Keturah, 'there are thousands of Nazarenes in the Jews quarter! Hark! you will hear the trampling of their feet—there—and there again. O Elias! And that shout! O my dear mistress, did you hear that?'

'The time is come then,' said Judith, calmly, but turning very pale. 'Well—well—anything is better than suspense. I have had time enough to fortify my soul.' She arose, but found herself trembling more than Keturah; she then dropped on her knees.

The foundations of the house seemed shaken by the noise of the crowds around it. Keturah covered her face with the silken counterpane. Judith stretched out her arms to heaven, and cried aloud—

'O Jehovah, look down from the heaven of heavens wherein Thou dwellest, and give me strength for this tremendous hour! O Lord God of our fathers, uphold with thine everlasting arms the souls which are now sinking with mortal dread! Hear—O Eternal One—Hear! Be thou this day on the side of the innocent and the oppressed!'

The voice of Jocenus was heard in a passage adjoining—'Let them break down the gate, they shall come in by no other way!' Presently he sprang into the chamber: 'Judith!' he exclaimed, 'Judith! the hell hounds are upon us!'

She stood up and wept upon his neck. At the sight of her father she was weak as infancy. His eyes were red and frenzied; when they turned upon Judith they swam in agonizing tears; but when they turned away, they were fierce as those of a raging lion. He scarce seemed to know what he was about, for he suddenly pushed Judith from him, and went out into a passage to listen.

She pressed both her hands on her

heart to still its wild beatings, and strove earnestly, nor strove in vain, to recover some portion of her moral fortitude, and dignity.

'My unfortunate Keturah,' said she, endeavouring to encourage her agitated handmaid. 'I wish heartily that I had not allowed you to hazard your liberty and happiness for me. I blame myself severely. Ferrently do I wish that you had fled from this unhappy city with the man who loved you, while the question was under consideration. But pray do not despair. It is not likely, I hope, that you will be detained long in prison; it will not be difficult, I would willingly believe, for Leoni to ransom you.'

'Do you think that we shall really be taken to prison?' said Keturah. 'Is it possible that you think these rooms will be discovered?'

'Is it possible that I could think otherwise,' said Judith, 'unless I were weakly desirous of deceiving myself with false hopes?'

'O my dear mistress, if Belaset were here, she could not suffer more with fear than I do now. My blood is frozen within me—my heart is up in my throat, and I feel half choked. The noise grows louder—I am sure that the people come nearer; pray God they have not got inside the gate! Caleb and the men were there to defend it when I came into this room to you, and Caleb bade me tell you, that the Nazarenes should walk over his dead body, before they should enter the court.'

'Jehovah reward him—for I cannot,' said Judith.

As quickly as she could, she fastened on her apparel, which had been loosened when she lay down. The rich gown she had last worn lay upon a chair, and she was about to don it when she paused, and said to herself—

'No, this is too splendid in material, the fashion of it is too imposing; the present moment, perhaps, affords me the last opportunity I shall ever have of choosing my vesture. I will look around my ward-

robe, and see if I have not some robe that may be more suitable with my misfortunes.' She found one of most becoming form, of one colour, and of an unobtrusive, though costly material.

'This,' said she, when it was on as she was fastening a tight girdle around her waist, 'may be my funeral dress.' She next took off the pearls from her head, the diamond bracelets which were upon her arms and the glittering ornaments which were upon her neck, saying, 'These would be out of place on a body whence the soul, which is the body's chief ornament, had fled for ever. Neither is it likely yon raging populace would allow me to die in gold and diamonds. Out of my sight, then, ye shining baubles!'

Keturah seeing Judith about to leave the room, begged, with alarm, to be told where she was going. Judith calmly replied—

'To the hall above. I have already risked the lives of my friends more than I ought. Caleb shall not be sacrificed for me: his existence is of as much value as mine. God pleased to make me the object of persecution and injustice, and I will submit to His will.'

'Do not throw yourself into the power of those cruel men,' said Keturah, vainly seeking to detain her mistress. 'Do not throw away the chance of escape that yet remains for you. Ah! you will perish if they take you prisoner. And if you go up you will not persuade Caleb to leave the gate. I know he will never quit it alive, unless the crowd go back.'

'He SHALL quit it,' said Judith disengaging herself from Keturah's hold. 'I will not have the weight of his death upon my mind; and happy—happy should I be if you and my father were in safety, and if I could yield myself up to suffer alone.'

'Shall I remain here, or shall I go with you?' asked Keturah.

'You shall remain, kind damsel,' said Judith, affectionately pressing her hands; 'and I hope that the

voluntary surrender of myself, will procure me a little favour from those who seek me, which I may be able to turn to your advantage. It is of no use for my father and myself to shun our foes. I entertain not one hope for either ; but if those who have served us with so much self-devotion might but be spared I shall rejoice indeed !'

She went into the broad passage, which was divided from the concealed staircase leading up to the ark by a wall. The secret door in the wall was fastened, and she had not been made acquainted with the means of opening it. Again and again, she passed her hand round it, but the spring eluded her search. While she stood still, Jocenus came to her.

'Why are you here, my child ?' he asked.

'Father,' she said, 'I cannot open this door ; tell me how it may be unfastened.'

He showed her the spring, unsuspecting of her intention, then walked up and down the passage, while she leaned against the wall, as if listening. Watching a moment, when he had reached the farthest end of the passage, she slipped through the door, shut it safely after her, and hastened up the dark steps. She easily found the outlet at the back of the ark, and, knowing how it was secured, stood in the hall, before her father discovered her absence.

But she almost repented of her resolution, as she crossed the hall to the colonnade fronting the gate, when she heard the noises of the crowds more distinctly, and saw the terror-struck looks of the few domestics, who, faithful to the last, had remained in the house, animated by the example of Caleb and Keturah.

She addressed herself to one of them, who looked astonished and grieved beyond measure to see her there.

'Good purveyor,' said she, 'you are here in an evil time. Tell your companions that I shall cherish gratitude in my heart toward them

and you until the moment which separates me from life. Tell them that I now go to give myself up to the Christians—that I may, if possible, prevent you all from becoming victims.'

'Dearest lady,' said the purveyor, almost in tears, 'return, I beseech you, to your retreat. There is still hope that we may drive back the Nazarenes ; or, at least, if they should effect an entrance, prevent them from finding your place of concealment.'

'Would any place of concealment be proof against such an enemy as that which you see the people bringing against us yonder?' asked Judith, stretching out her hand, and pointing to the flames and smoke rising from a small building and contiguous to the court wall. 'You see they are *determined*,' she added, with a grave smile.

'Truly, if they bring fire against us, dear lady, it is useless to oppose them,' said the purveyor with despairing looks.

'Quite useless, purveyor ; they would raze this house to the foundations but that would they find me and my father.'

The gate was now battered with a machine, and every individual within heard the heavy thundering strokes despairingly. Five soldiers, with considerable difficulty, had made their way over the roofs of the storehouses, and one by one threw themselves down the side of a buttress which jutted out, broad and large, into the court, having projecting places on its sides, which afforded them convenient footing ; but as each passed round the foot of the buttress he was saluted with a deadly blow from a hatchet, and fell dead, or dying, on the ground ; four men were cut down in this manner, and lay one on another in their gore ; but the fifth sprang on the man in whose hand was the dripping instrument and wrenched it from his grasp. Caleb (for he was the assailant) grappled desperately with his antagonist. They were well matched in point of strength,

and the struggle continued some minutes without either gaining an advantage; they rolled over and over on the ground, and fastened their teeth in each other's shoulder; but now the soldier contrived to draw from his belt a knife with a sharp pointed blade, which he was about to plunge into Caleb's left side, when his arm was grasped by a third person, and his own weapon was struck into his breast. Caleb jumped up, and staggered with momentary fright—Gesta, or Gesta's spirit was before him;—but if a spirit, it had certainly a very corporeal aspect, and spoke very like an ordinary mortal.

'I have just got down the buttress in time to save you, honest Caleb,' was spoken in Gesta's own voice. "I have slain the villain with his own knife. He has gone himself to the shades instead of despatching you thither."

'Are you that Gesta who was hung in the town gaol?' inquired the incredulous Caleb.

'I am Gesta that was in the town gaol, but I was not hung there,' was the reply. 'I have been hidden in my mother's tower, and I should not have ventured out of it had I not heard that an attack was about to be made on this house; then, not even my mother's entreaties, nor my own personal fears, could keep me from hastening hither.'

The thick eyebrows of Caleb were raised while Gesta spoke; his mouth opened in astonished pleasure, and he looked like a man whose only son had been unexpectedly restored to life. The small command of language which he usually possessed failed him now. The dreadful acts in which he had been just engaged—the frightful outcries still resounding around—the imminent peril of his master and mistress—all faded from his mind like creations of a dream from which he had been suddenly awakened. The joy he felt was violent in proportion to the confusion, grief, and horror in which he had just before been immersed.

But this joy was evanescent in-

deed! For the gate was fast yielding to the ponderous blows it received, and shouts, expressive of success, followed every stroke that was given. An opening was made in it, and a man thrust himself through, guarding himself with a broad short sword.

'There are others coming down the buttress,' said Gesta; 'at them, Caleb, with the hatchet!'

Caleb directly resumed his dreadful task of slaughter, and Gesta, plucking away the weapons of the dead soldier by his feet, flew to the gate, and succeeded in overpowering the individual who had entered there, while the persons who were preparing to follow the intruder through the gap, caught the alarm, and fell back daunted.

An archer next scaled the wall of the court and shot an arrow at Gesta, which, by good fortune, missed him, although it passed within an inch of his head. He immediately took shelter behind a small guard-tower which was by the side of the gate, and there still awaited to attack any one that might be bold enough to come through the opening which the battering engine had made.

The archer on the wall was joined by other men with bows in their hands, who, from this elevated position, were able to see all that was passing in the court. Caleb was the immediate victim of their vengeance; an arrow pierced his neck; he staggered across the court to the colonnade at the entrance of the house, and fell, just as Judith was coming out from her place of concealment with the hope that, by giving herself up voluntarily, she might save him.

The Hebrew lady was seen by the archers, and a burst of yells of hatred, and of threatening, followed the signal which they gave to the people. One after another of the winged shafts whizzed by Judith's bending head, but did not touch her.

'Hold—hold!' was the cry of a priest to the archers; 'harm not a hair of the infidels' heads! With-

draw your weapons of death! Do not forget the commands of the abbot, to whom the martyr has appeared in a vision?

With reluctance the drawn bows were slackened, and the arrows allowed to drop back into their quivers. 'Let the priests go in themselves,' shouted the archers, 'if they will not let us fly a shaft against the devils here—let them go in themselves, and take all chances.'

The proposition was received with acclamations by the multitude. The priests and monks were urged forward to the half-shattered gate, and after a brief and somewhat alarmed conference among themselves, the one who had checked the bowmen volunteered to venture first through the gap, and the rest were to follow close upon his heels. The soldiers were called up, with Garston, the gaol-keeper, at their head, and ordered to follow the priests with swords drawn, but on no account to use them, unless the ghostly fathers gave them distinct commands to do so.

A broad foot, protected on the under part only with a sandal, was softly put through the hole in the gate, and lodged on the paving within; and a body, habited in a monastic rochet and cloak, cautiously followed it. But before the priest drew in his second foot, and the sturdy limb it supported, he threw back the hood from his shaven crown, and cast a terrified look all around him. He saw only a female figure, graceful and motionless, as though it had been some exquisite production of the chisel, stooping over a dying Jew, whose head was supported against the slender pillar of a colonnade, and whose pale looks were rendered ghastly by the contrast of a rough black beard, and eyebrows thick and bushy.

The priest had no doubt that this female figure before him was that of the merchant's daughter, and he crossed himself many times with quickness, on the forehead, the hands, and the breast, being exceedingly fearful of her supposed

arts of sorcery. With beads and cross conspicuous, he prepared, courageously, to approach her, and having placed his whole person in the court, and a brother of the church being about to join him, he took a few steps forward. But he was directly seized by Gesta, and thrown to the earth, where he lay as still as a stone with fear, although he had received no injury whatever.

'Back!' exclaimed Gesta, bestriding the prostrate body of the foremost priest, and addressing with the most determined gesture

'The crowd of hooded heads' which he saw pressing to the gate. 'Back! there are men in this house still, and while one of them exists you will find no entrance here!'

The sword he held, and his bold manner kept the priests at bay for a minute or two, but a voice close to him, which he could not disobey, put an end to his resistance.

'Gesta,' said Judith, and her clear and lofty tones were heard by all near the gate, 'if you have any friendship for me and my father, by that friendship I entreat you draw back, and let the ministers of the Christian faith enter—I place myself in their hands—and whether I be innocent or guilty, I leave it to be openly determined, according to the usages of this kingdom.'

Gesta met her eye; it expressed, in one glance, that thrilled his soul, affection and gratitude, a greeting, and a farewell. Caleb had told her in few words that Gesta had escaped, he knew not how, from the gaol in which he was to have died—that he had since been hid in Myrza's tower, and had come from thence at the risk of his life, to assist his friends in their need.

Gesta was restored to her as it were from the dead—still devoted to her—still ready to sacrifice himself for her, and for her father. What a flood of happiness broke in upon her spirit as she heard this. But then her faithful Caleb was mortally wounded—the fatal arrow still rankled in his neck; and here was a reverse as melancholy as the

former was cheering. To save further bloodshed, she, with her own hands, endeavoured to unfasten the gate, but she was not strong enough to succeed in her efforts. She then turned and faced the wondering priest who had risen from the ground.

'Sir,' said she, 'I regret very much that you should have been treated with disrespect—I trust you will pardon the too hasty zeal of my affectionate friends. You are not hurt, I hope, by the fall?'

He stammered out a part of a paternoster by way of answer, and shrank back, while Judith could scarcely refrain from a smile of contempt. She then turned to the archers who had descended the wall, and to the men who had got down the buttress of the storehouses, addressing them with equal courtesy and gracefulness.

'Sirs, I assure you,' she said, 'it has not been with my wish, or by my authority, that your friends, whose bodies you see, have died. I would willingly have preserved them; but, I entreat you, forgive my servant, who I fear will suffer for his rashness in the loss of his own life;' here she was much affected, and could not disguise her feelings. 'You are men,' she added; 'you know how difficult it is to govern oneself within the strict limits of prudence, when zeal, and a strong regard for those whom you serve, drive you on to violent deeds; pardon, therefore, my dying servant.'

The rough soldiers involuntarily drew off their steel bonnets from their heads and lowering their weapons, leaning on them, while one more gallant than his fellows, replied to the Jewish lady—

'You know, fair dame, our errand here, and if you are the daughter of Jocenus you must give yourself up to us.'

'Sirs,' said Judith, 'I have not, you have seen I have not, kept back from you. I have come of my own free will, out of secret places in my house, where it might have been difficult for you to have found me,

and I am here at your mercy. My innocency of the crime of which I am accused is known in heaven, and to heaven I leave the event of the surrender of myself. But if it please you, sirs, permit me to see the last moments of my unfortunate servant. He has been with us a great many years, and has served us most faithfully.' Her voice was broken, and the listeners, thus appealed to, felt arise within them sentiments more generous and humane than they were accustomed to entertain.

'We have nothing to say against stopping a few minutes,' said one of the men, looking at and speaking for his comrades.

'We have been given to understand,' said another, 'that the house is a precious nest of sorcerers, and blasphemers, and murderers of Christians; but no harm can come of holding guard in the court here a few minutes. So go, lady,' (they were so touched, they could not bring themselves to give her any opprobrious title,) 'go to your servant, and we undertake you shall not be disturbed, that is, if the son of a devil,' here the speaker looked at the bodies on the ground, 'does not take longer than an hour about the dying job. More than an hour we can't stay at farthest, but within that time do what you like, get yourself together what apparel you are likely to need, (for the prisons are not places where raiment is to be had for the asking) and it may be as well if you take with you a little of that coin your father is said to have such hoards of, to buy yourself good treatment in the dungeons; blow me to tatters with fire-balls, if any one shall touch a penny of it, no, nor so much as the value of a Scottish plack or bodel of it, until you are in the hands of the lord abbot.'

'You are more gentle to me than I could have expected,' said Judith, 'but you shall see that your forbearance is not abused. I will not quit your sight, you shall see and hear every communication I have with the persons of my house. Ap-

proach to the colonnade, and keep watch around it, I will not detain you long.'

The men placed themselves in a row at a little distance before the entrance, and Judith bent down by the side of the expiring Caleb, whose eyes, expressing all the lowly homage of his faithful and honest heart, were turned upon her, and were fast growing misty and fixed. His garberdine was frightfully bespattered with brains and clotted gore; his hands, which clutched his sleeves in the last agonies of nature were also dyed with the same horrid moisture; even his face and beard were sprinkled with blood; and beside him lay the deadly hatchet he had used with so much force, its blade notched and stained and its very handle crimsoned.

'Is there anything I can do for you?' asked Judith.

He strove to speak, but the effort was too much for him; the sound he produced was inarticulate; he shook his head mournfully, and a torrent of blood issued from his mouth. Judith snatched from her neck a Persian embroidered shawl, and without scruple, carefully and affectionately wiped away with it the life-current which had been spent in her service.

At length his lips moved, and he managed to pronounce twice, the word 'Gesta!' at the same time raising his hand, and making a motion with it, which seemed to express a wish that Gesta should come to him. So Judith understood him and she spoke to the soldier standing nearest to her—

'Will you, kind archer, tell you young man of my nation, that the dying Caleb desires to see him instantly? it would be an additional kindness on your part.'

The soldier immediately complied with her request. Gesta came, his eyes moistened with tears.

'Ah! Caleb, art thou there!' he exclaimed; 'what! old friend, and fellow-worker, quite overpowered! quite gone! Wilt thou rise up no more to talk with and cheer me?

Wilt thou no more move about the storehouses, which to thee have been more dear than palaces? Must the horses have a stranger to feed and tend them? Must the bales, the spice-boxes, and wine-cask, have another to keep them in an order strange to them? Why Caleb, thou shouldst not have died before me! and in such a cause thou diest, that I envy thee thy lot. It was the wish of my soul to perish for Judith and her father, and to expire in her sight, and thou—thou, Caleb—hast stolen from me the coveted sacrifice.'

Caleb seemed for a few minutes to revive, he raised his head, attempted to smile upon Gesta, gave him his hand, and pressed that of the young companion to whom he had been so much attached, tighter and tighter. The fingers squeezed the palm they held with such expressive force that all which Caleb's heart felt for Gesta, was fully conveyed to the latter.

At length Caleb spoke—

'Tell my dear master,' said he, at intervals, 'tell him—that I have always been faithful to him. The last cargo of velvets—and gold-twist—and brodered work—is disordered, but it has not been my fault.'

'Do not trouble yourself, Caleb,' said Judith; 'my father knows that you have been a most invaluable servant to him: he can never replace your loss, Caleb. It is impossible to tell you how we value you—but pray do not think of the merchandize now. Is there any religious assistance we can obtain for you?'

'If,'—said Caleb—'if the hermit were here—'

'I see him just entering the gate,' said Judith to Gesta; 'will you ask him to come hither?'

Gesta stood up and beckoned to the hermit, who came, and looked down with pity upon the prostrate Israelite.

'Do you die a Jew or a Christian?' he asked in solemn accents.

'Nay, reverend father,' said Judith, quickly and softly interrupting

him; 'pardon me, but do not ask him that. Tell him of the immortal life beyond the grave, but do not ask that question.'

'I know,' said the hermit to Caleb, 'that whether you be called a Jew or Gentile, you have lived a worthy life in the station in which it has pleased God, the Maker of us all, to place you. But you must not think, meritorious as your life has been, that it has been sufficiently meritorious to deserve that amazing and never-ending felicity to which I trust you will now depart.'

'I do not think so: no—no!' exclaimed Caleb, almost with vehemence, 'I have always been a poor worthless fellow! I have no goodness in me—not a grain—not a grain!'

'Then the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, will be goodness for you, my friend,' said the hermit: 'look upon this cross which I uplift, and believe that He died to open heaven to every contrite and humble soul. His love for you is as great as His love for any other person in the world—only believe in Him.'

Caleb, instead of looking at the cross, now gazed upwards into the sky, Judith, Gesta, and the hermit, watching him steadily. He appeared to be thinking with earnestness, and presently he drew a deep breath it might be in mingled joy and pain. A smile of peace overspread his features—again he drew that long and trembling breath, and his head dropped on his breast.

'He is gone!—it is all over with honest Caleb!' said Gesta, letting go the lifeless hand he held, and starting up. Judith remained for several minutes supporting the body then gently laid it down on the paving, and did her utmost to prepare herself for her own coming trials.

'Ah! Caleb,' she murmured, 'all this which thou hast just suffered, and much—much more—I may presently be called on to endure. But as an immortal hope brightened thy last moments, so shall it mine. Hold up firmly now, my woman's heart.'

The soldiers, during the departing moments of Caleb, had drawn nearer to the spot where he lay; the most dissolute and hardened of them felt a fellow-feeling with the sufferer; and when they saw by his dress and appearance that he was no more than a serf, and yet beheld the attentions of the lady, his mistress, to him, and her unaffected gaze of anguish when he breathed his last sigh, they looked upon her with undissembled respect, and, for the moment, were quite disarmed of their prejudice, and hatred, and ferocity.

The populous outside the court, now became outrageous for the Jewess to be brought forth. Jocennus was not so much demanded, the clamour was principally directed against Judith. The priests in the interest of the abbot, with the soldiers whom Judith had interested on her behalf, kept off the crowd from pressing within the gates, until a sudden rush being made, they found themselves unable to protect it longer, and nothing less could be expected than the immediate demolition of the Jew's house, and massacre of all its inmates, without distinction. But just at this most critical period, a head surrounded with a serpent's skin, was seen rising above the inner side of the court-wall next the gate, and above the head was elevated a bare and bony arm, waving a steel wand in a manner expressive of command.

'The Witch of the Water-side!—the Witch of the Water-side!' was the cry now caught from lip to lip, among the throng.

'Aye, marry,' said an old sour-featured woman, who was thrusting with her elbows to get near the gate, that she might obtain a glimpse of the Jew's Daughter, 'Myrza is sure to be where she should not be.'

'For the matter of that, the witch is well matched among the Jewesses,' said an Amazonian woman, in a loud masculine voice, as she emulated the other in her efforts to gratify her curiosity. 'I say she ought to have been fuel for a fire long ago.'

'You had better say less about the witch, or speak softer words,' said the blacksmith, mentioned before, who was forcing his way before the two women. 'You would not like to have the strength taken away from your limbs, or to have your house blasted by an evil spell, to have your children wasted away in the marrow and the blood, or your own days made shorter than they should be, by a foul charm; guard your tongue, therefore, while you are safe.'

'I hold my tongue for the fear of an old, ugly, heretic quean, like that!' exclaimed the Amazon, with the blazing eye of a thorough-bred termagant. 'No, I'll uplift my voice, if nobody else dare do it, and say she is a bag of hell, and a foul piece of carrion flesh, and she should be ducked in the river as many times as there are saints on the bead roll, and then dried on a heap of goodly faggots, which I'd pile myself, if a hand was wanted for such a job!'

'She has mounted up the wall!' cried the blacksmith; 'hold your peace, or there's no telling what harm may light on us that are standing about you; and as I have a bed-ridden father at home, and a sickly wife, and a lame boy, I want no more misfortunes, the blessed Virgin knows. If you have no regard for yourself, have a little charity for your neighbours, and don't provoke her to do us any more mischief than she has done already.'

'Mischief!' repeated the shrew, 'mischief already. Yes, you pigeon-livered, sneaking fellow, you, she has done mischief enough already, I know. There was one of my neighbours broke his knee yesterday; another lost a calf last Friday; another found his horse stone-blind in the stable; and I have suffered enough from her mischief. To the river with her—to the river with the witch!'

Her shouts attracted much attention, and as the blacksmith was urging her to silence, many took part with her, and demanded the

destruction of Myrza. Myrza, standing erect on the wall, pointed her wand to the sky with her right hand, and stretched her left hand, toward the gate.

An attitude so striking, combined with her tall spectral figure, and her wild, tattered attire, impressed the populace with superstitious expectation and awe. Even those persons nearest the gate, who were bent on forcing their way in against all obstacles, paused, and drew back in order to survey the startling apparition.

'Look to the clouds!' cried Myrza, in shrill, unearthly tones; and the people, as by one impulse, directed their eyes above to the ethereal canopy over the city. A strange noise of confusion, alarm, and horror succeeded. The ground tint of the sky was a very pale, sickly, unusual tint; quite across the middle of the heavens was one straight and cloudless track, from each side of which diverged long and narrow clouds, of such a form and colour as no one present among that multitude had ever seen before; all the picture was sublimely vast and uniform; the strips of cloud exactly resembled each other; they lay low over the city, and between each was a clear space of that singularly tinted sky.

'Look!—look!' exclaimed the witch again; and while all faces were upturned, a sudden light, of extraordinary brilliance, was seen quivering along the lines of cloud so that all were at once in agitation from one end of the heavens to the other.

Many persons now fell on their knees, and exclaimed—'The judgment day is come! the last day is come!' Some prayed most fervently who had never prayed before, and some swooned on the ground with deadly terror.

'Dare not to enter this house!' screamed Myrza; 'dare not to hurt a hair of the head of any one belonging to it or I will bring down the clouds themselves upon you to revenge the wronging of the inno-

cent!' All gave back from the walls of the Jew's house at the bidding of Myrza, and there were few who did not at that time believe, that in some way or other, she had caused the strange sight they beheld.

'You assembly of the ignorant and the cruel-minded,' cried Myrza, in her former strained tones—'you, whose vile and fierce passions make you more fearful, and infinitely more despicable, than a horde of the wildest and most unsightly creatures of the earth's wastes and wilds—you, who blindly follow the leadings of an ambitious and needy priest, who seek to ruin a people as righteous as yourselves, because he instigates you and goads you on to do it, that he may be rich in this world's goods, for of the other he takes very little heed—you, mole-eyed, tiger-hearted, host of men and women, calling yourselves Christians, hearken to me! There was a time, when, in this city, dwelt many who had the elements in their hands—they could direct the lightnings, and aim the thunderbolt—they could guide the wind in its course when it was at its utmost fury—they could bring down the rain in cataracts to swell the river, and cause mischief to those against whom their anger was directed—they could make the very ground to quake, tremble, and open! These mighty spirits had at their command, also, several most potent and invisible beings; and, that woe may come upon you, O blind and furious people! I will speak their names aloud. Yes, I will speak out abroad the fearful names of those vast phantoms which are now against you, and then, if you will, drag me hence to the waters or to the fire, your doom is certain! destroying me cannot prevent the evil which must come upon you and your children! And hear me—'

'For the love of heaven, make her hold still her harsh, croaking tongue!' exclaimed the blacksmith. 'Lincoln, I think, is never without some sort of ill-luck; I suppose she will bring another battle in our

streets, between the barons and the king for Magna Charta.'

'Stop her—stop her!' was the general cry. 'Myrza, hold your peace, and you shall not be molested,' said a yeoman, near her; but Myrza was in one of her enthusiastic paroxysms, and nothing could stop her.

'I,' cried she, 'am an inheritor of the spells which command these rulers of the fiends and phantoms! I can bring them, or send them, when and wither I please! Why should such a sublime and mighty art as this not fix your admiration, and induce you to look further into occult wonders? I am no ordinary witch; hitherto, I have not touched your cattle or your persons, your barns or your homesteads, your styes, your henroosts, or your provisions. Hitherto, I have not sent among you the canker, the mildew, or any manner of accidents or disorders. You have calumniated me and my glorious art! you have caused me to perish slowly by famine, and cold, and nakedness, and by the sharp-pointed arrows of cruel tongues! but I have forborne to injure you, I repeat it, I have disdained to revenge myself upon you. But now—' her voice became more hollow and gloomy in its threatening cadence, 'I see—I see an hour approaching of which yon spectacle in the heavens is a token, and a sign, and a warning. HELA, the witch of death, is shedding her ban upon you! Yonder, right across the heavens, is her path, though you cannot see her, for your eyes are gross, and your souls are earthy—earthy—vile. Nine hundred spirits are with her this fateful hour. Count the spaces between the magic vapour on each side her majestic path, there are a hundred of them, and nine spirits stretch along each space, which is their track.'

This declaration was so impressively made, that it much increased the agitation of the terror-struck crowd. Myrza was now seen tearing off from her brow the snake-skin fillet, and, while a mass of tangled

and ragged hair, of ensanguined hue, fell half over her face and neck, she uplifted that skin in her left hand to the sky, her right still pointing immovably the steel wand to the centre of the heavens.

'Hela, the terrible!—Hela, the dread!' she shrieked rather than spoke, 'I give thee greeting! I know thee, and thou art my patroness, my teacher, and yet my servant. Thy appearance is terrible to flesh and blood. O, Hela!—O, death! Yet I can look upon thee steadily. Thou hast a summons for me—I must come into thy secret realms. It is well, I am ready.' Here Myrza addressed herself again to the people; 'But though I am about to die, you need not rejoice, there are evils coming upon you. The vassals of Hela are all threatening you—she has brought them all against you—famine and fear, grief and pain, hunger and delay, faintness and sickness, cursing and howling, bloodshed and despair—I see them all—all. Partly they come to revenge my wrongs, and partly the wrongs of others. Draw back from the gate; extinguish yon rising fire which you have kindled; touch not anything belonging to this house or its inmates, for they are in the care of spirits of a high degree, and propitiate as much as you can the angry fiends.'

There was remaining among the peasantry of England, at that period, a great number of pagan superstitions; a fact which is much evidenced by the strange productions of the chisel about buildings of that day, as ornaments. There may be seen about the minster of Lincoln, and about other ancient Norman remains of that city, most grotesque heads, and groups of strange figures, the ideas of which could have come from no other source than paganism; and it is plain, by the application of such figures to sacred buildings that paganism must have been to some extent incorporated with the religion of the common people. We make this remark merely to account more completely for the readi-

ness with which Myrza's assumptions, and assertions, concerning supernatural existences, and the wizard art, were received on the present occasion.

The merchant, as soon as he discovered that his daughter had left her concealment, and with what intention, was struck with terrible dismay. Keturah, with sobs and cries walked about from the passage wringing her hands, and now and then stopping to listen with looks of wild apprehension. Sometimes she exclaimed, with bursts of grief, "My dearest lady! my dearest mistress! what will become of her—what will be her fate?" Then, as the shouts of the people and the noise of the battering machine at gate penetrated through the walls she trembled with personal fear, and muttered with sunken breath; 'if I had but gone with Belaset—Oh, if I had but gone with Belaset.' The next minute she would reproach herself bitterly for such a wish, and hurry to the ark with the intention of following Judith, and of sharing in her doom, whatever it might prove to be. But when the horrid noise was nearer, and heard more distinctly, she felt her terrors proportionately increase, and to proceed was beyond her ability. She sat down on the upper step, while the other servants of the house were gathered in a melancholy group below. The purveyor was the last to enter the concealed door of the ark.

'All is over I fear,' said he, 'our noble-minded lady has given herself into the hands of the soldiers with the hope of saving us, and Caleb is mortally wounded.'

'Caleb wounded, alas!' exclaimed Keturah: 'he has sacrificed himself, then, as he said he would, before his mistress and master should be taken. And I—how mean and abject I seem to myself! I have even let my lady go alone into the hands of her enemies—I have deserted her—left my post, which is that of an attendant on her person, induced by my worthless

fears. But I will not draw on myself the miseries of a deeper remorse—I will go to her at once, and I will be with her in prison, and at the hour of death.’

She arose as she spoke, and waving her hand to the domestics below, bade them farewell. They wished to deter her from going, although no one gave expression to that wish, but all pressing up the steps offered her their hands, wept as they bade her adieu, and hoped that she and her mistress would both meet kind treatment, friends, and a speedy acquittal.

‘Stay a moment Keturah,’ cried the merchant, from a distant end of the passage below, ‘I am coming too.’

The domestics gave back on each side the foot of the steps with looks of commiseration and respect, as Jocenus slowly walked up to them. He stopped an instant here, and looked on each side, but his passions were too mighty at that moment to permit him to speak; making a parting gesture to them, he ascended to the side of Keturah, and they stepped together through the door of the ark which was immediately secured within, and were unperceived by the soldiers in the hall, until Jocenus stepped into the middle of it. It was then supposed, as Keturah was seen on the marble stairs which led to the upper stories of the house, that both had come down those stairs, the existence of underground rooms not being suspected.

The first object which caught the attention of Jocenus was the body of Caleb, stretched on the pavement and Judith standing by it. The soldiers, at the first sight of Jocenus, were about to raise a shout of exultation, having both the accused persons in their power, but the merchant presented an aspect so noble, and yet so determined, that the cry died off in an indeterminate murmur. Not a man laid hands on him, as he stood glaring around, but all shrank back.

‘Dastards and slaves!’ he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, which

awoke all the slumbering echoes of the place. ‘Accursed demons! what is it ye seek in my house? Will plunder satisfy you? then plunder at your will! But touch these helpless ones, whom I am bound to protect with the hand of violence, and you die! Aye, a legion of you, by the living throne of Jehovah himself! This one feeble arm of mine, shall be turned to iron and to brass, and shall hurl a host of you to the depths of perdition, if you harm in the least my precious child, or her faithful servants!’

He was interrupted by Judith, who, coming to him, was strongly clutched in his protecting arms, while in a choked voice of agonising entreaty, she exclaimed—

‘Father! dearest, kindest, most honoured father! you cannot save us—it is impossible—the charge is terrible—fatal! Do not contend with them, father—father!’

‘Let them take me alone, if they must have a victim!’ said Jocenus; ‘only let them spare thee—let them leave thee in thy home!’

Judith sank on her knees, grasping his arms. The scene was overpowering, and the rough soldiers felt that even the abhorred Jews were of the same nature with themselves. Keturah embraced her mistress, bending down to support her, and weeping with her.

‘Will you not hear me, father?’ exclaimed Judith. ‘Oh, if you will not, we shall be doubly lost! Let me go to my dungeon! hark to the yelling crowd! and be convinced that there only is your daughter safe. Perhaps, and I cling to that hope, my death may satisfy our enemies, and you, and those left of our household, may escape. Since it is I only who am accused of the murder of Sir Hugh,’ here haughty innocence shaped her utterance, ‘perhaps I may prevail with my enemies to let my destruction suffice, and if it be so, right willingly shall I die.’

‘Die!’ exclaimed Jocenus, looking wildly around, with a countenance that menaced death; ‘nay,

daughter! our oppressors shall leave me or themselves bleeding upon this floor, before they shall take thee from thy home!

But Judith was resolute to yield herself to the soldiers, and she continued some minutes endeavouring to prevail on her father to refrain from irritating them, by quietly giving himself up also. Perceiving that the men grew impatient, she whispered to Keturah, giving her some errand to perform in the upper part of the house, then throwing her arms around the merchant's neck, took one long and lingering look of his features; and, before the bewildered Jocenus was fully aware of her resolution, she had veiled herself closely, and had crossed the threshold of her home for the last time. The court was full of priests and armed men, but Judith scarcely trembled in the least, and her voice was singularly steady as she spoke aloud to them—

'Sirs—I am now at your disposal—I am perfectly ready to go with you whither you please.'

Jocenus was maddened at the sight of his daughter surrounded by a number of men hostile to him, but the event proved that Judith had wisely acted in giving them no trouble to capture her. Her calm, and even cheerful dignity, her humility and courteousness, worked with irresistible effect on the majority of the hearts of those who had her in their power. Some persons were certainly there of natures so low, and of sentiments so despicable, that the finest exhibition of excellence and nobleness, could make no impression upon them whatever, but these were the minority, and their coarse dispositions were swayed by the others.

'Will you walk or ride, fair dame?' Judith was asked by the colleague of Garston, a short, stout, swarthy man-at-arms.

'I will ride upon my own palfrey, if I am allowed to choose,' replied Judith; 'and I entreat that you will extend to my father a similar favour.'

'I say both the infidels shall walk,' said Garston, doggedly.

'I say they shall not walk—they shall both of them ride! aye, and their servants too, when we have caught them, if it so please me,' said the colleague.

The question would, perhaps, have been decided by a contest of blows between the two, had not others joined the colleague, and decided that Judith, at least, should ride. Gesta was standing hopelessly, but while the stables were being opened, and a beautiful palfrey saddled, and brought forth, he came near to Judith, and she laid her hand on his, at the same time whispering to him—'Adopted brother of my heart! your hand is cold as marble, but I know the warmth and depth of your soul!'

Gesta now saw the moment approach when she must depart, and a wild defiance was upon his face, while a ferocity, equal to that of which Jocenus was conscious, swelled his breast. Her command had hitherto controlled him into passiveness, but now it could do so no longer. The merchant came out of the hall followed close by three soldiers; and when he saw Gesta, his face lighted up with a brief gleam of joy and hope, and he exclaimed in an affecting tone—

'My nephew alive, and here with us once more! Can fortune have left me such a joy and comfort amidst all the desolation she has brought upon me? How glad I am to meet thee here, once again, these tears can tell thee! O, Gesta! thou seest what has come upon us. My traffic is all stopped—my lately arrived cargoes lie unloaded in the river—my home concerns are in disorder—my domestic joys are departed from me—my wealth is about to be transferred into the hands of my enemies—and my daughter, the glory and pride of my life, is to be dragged away to a cruel tribunal by savages such as destroyed our brethren at York!'

The merchant seemed wholly to forget that Gesta was of Christian

birth, and not at all related to him, a mist was on his faculties ; he saw before him only the youth he had educated in the Jewish traditions, and commerce, and owned as his nephew.

'And you,' said Gesta to Jocenus, 'you too must go with Judith, to be judged by the corrupt men in power !'

'I cannot now reflect upon my own danger,' said the merchant. 'O, nephew !' here he grasped the arm of Gesta, and drew him nearer, 'think of my burning rage, to see a young creature, so exquisitely fashioned in mind, and form, and features, as your cousin, become an object for the rude gaze of licentious priests, hardened military ruffians, and dirty peasant rogues ! Rather, I swear by our father Abraham—rather than see her go out of this court among the rabble crowd, I would prefer beholding her dead upon these stones before me !'

Jocenus saw his own passion reflected on Gesta's pallid face.

'Merchant,' said the latter, in a rugged and intense whisper, 'what you say finds a deep echo within me. Had I a thousand lives, I would gladly resign them to save the fine delicacy of Judith's mind from the least imaginable shock !'

'I know thou wouldst—I am satisfied of it,' said Jocenus. 'But what is to be done now ? Thinkest thou, dear nephew, that one so tenderly bred as my Judith has been, will not shrink a thousand times from the coarse looks, and language, of those who will have the charge of her after she has been taken from hence ? And can we endure to fancy her without the protection of a father, or a brother, in those horrible dungeons, in the castle of the dissolute earl of Lincoln, or in the power of the heir to the crown ?'

'You fire me to frenzy, merchant !' said Gesta. 'Judith must not—shall not—go hence, while blood is left in my veins !'

'Nor while blood is left in mine !' exclaimed Jocenus, aloud ; and

opening his robe, he produced two light and keen Turkish swords, one of which Gesta grasped, as he threw himself by the side of the merchant. The latter, grasping his daughter around the waist, placed his back against a pillar, and bade the soldiers stand back. This desperate resistance was so little looked for, that the merchant and Gesta were enabled to gain a considerable advantage at first, especially as they were assisted by three strong labouring Hebrews, armed with knives and daggers. There were two pillars in the centre of the colonnade far less slender than the rest, and against one of these Jocenus and his friends planted themselves.

'Ho—ho !' shouted Garston ; 'you see, my men, that after all infidels are not caught as easily as robins at Christmas : now you must be as cautious as hinds walking on stilts among the clay in the fens.'

'It is not the lady's fault that we are detained, you may plainly see that,' said the colleague. And, indeed, it was not her fault, for she was at that moment saying to her father and Gesta, while she strove to free herself from the merchant's arm—

'This is nothing short of madness. O, father, hear me, and I give me up ! Resist as you will, we must inevitably be taken at last ! and then, O Jehovah ! what may be the horrors of our fate, after you have roused the fiercest passions of our captors ? Gesta, are you, too, deaf to my petitions ? You have but lately escaped the clutches of death, why will you now again expose yourself to it ? You are doing me a fatal injury in opposing the soldiers ; why then will you not throw down that sword at my bidding ?'

'Dear Judith, this sword,' said Gesta, 'was put into my hands by your father, and I *must* assist him to defend you with it. When I am powerless in death, as Caleb is, then will I quit this sword, and not before. No man alive shall take you hence while I exist and can handle this good sword in your service !'

'Say no more to *me*, daughter,' said Jocenus; 'I am unmoved as this pillar against which I lean. Now, my stout Hebrews, stand steady, and keep your eyes open, for the soldiers are coming on us!'

'You speak of this pillar being unmoved,' said Gesta, 'but it yields behind me in a very extraordinary way.'

A flash of joy suddenly shot across the face of Jocenus.

'I remember when I bought this house,' said he, hastily, to Gesta, 'the old Saxon noble, who sold it to me, told me there was an important passage underground, which led from the inside of one of the two pillars which then alone supported the entrance of the house; I have looked for the opening to that passage several times in vain, perhaps you have found it. Contrive to sound the pillar with the handle of your weapon, as you stand, and try if you can perceive the outline of an opening.'

'There is little need, merchant, for doing so,' said Gesta; 'I feel a part of the pillar ready to fall; I believe there merely wants a strong pressure to break it inwards.'

'Well, you stand more out of sight than I,' said Jocenus, 'therefore do not hesitate a moment, but break it inwards.'

Gesta applied his shoulder, with his utmost strength, to that part of the circumference of the large pillar which he had felt to shake, and although he could not succeed in forcing it in, yet he plainly discovered that the interior was hollow, and that he had really found the opening to a secret passage. Burning with the hope of effecting the escape of the merchant and his daughter, he again addressed his shoulder to the task, and was enraptured at his success, when a piece of stone fell from the side of the pillar and revealed a dark opening, through which he thrust his hand.

'What success?' asked Jocenus, breathlessly, but without removing his eyes for a moment from his antagonists.

'I have made a hole in the pillar,' replied Gesta; 'the column is solid just above the hole, but below, that is, near the ground, it is quite hollow.'

'Praise to God!' exclaimed Jocenus; 'thou hast found a way of deliverance. It is the passage the Saxon told me of; let one of the Hebrews help thee to break in the stone, if it be possible, to a space large enough for our escape.'

The entrance to this secret passage was a piece of the rounded side of the pillar, about a yard square; it had never had any kind of fastenings, and was so nicely fitted into the stone around it, that it required none. Age had crusted the inside of the hollow part of the pillar with a vegetable substance, which had materially weakened it, especially on the thinnest side, where the entrance to the passage was. This being the case, Gesta, and one of the Hebrew labourers, who were determined to effect their purpose, if it was to be effected at all, found means, in a brief space of time, to remove several additional pieces of stone, and then to take out the remainder of that square piece which filled up the orifice of the entrance.

'Have you any success?' asked the merchant again, without turning his head.

'It is done,' whispered Gesta, resuming his sword, and his place beside Jocenus. 'The labourers cover the opening, so that it cannot be seen by the soldiers unless they approach close to us.'

'And close they do not intend to come,' said the merchant; 'they have been consulting together, and now they are fixing their arrows in their bows. But have you been inside the entrance, to discover if there are steps?'

'I have stood upright within the hollow part of the pillar,' replied Gesta, 'and there are steps, in good condition, leading down I know not how far. But all is so dark below, I am at a loss to tell how we shall contrive to make our way with safety.'

'And, perhaps,' said Judith, who had admitted to her breast a little hope from this discovery Gesta had made, but now saw its fallacy, 'when we get into the secret passages we may find no way of getting out again. Our condition would then be more dreadful than we can now imagine.'

'We fly from horrors more dreadful than mere death,' said Jocenus; 'say no more, nephew, I will edge my way to the opening and enter, while you take my place; and as soon as Judith, also, is within the pillar, follow thou my steps, and let the Hebrews, one by one, stand here, and one by one stepping cautiously to the entrance of the passage, disappear within it; charge the last who enters to pile up the loose stones inside the opening, in order to impede the advance of those of our enemies who would pursue us. Let each be prompt, and bold, and expert, then life and safety is once more ours. I have no doubt, now I call to mind what the Saxon said, that the passage has many outlets. Judith, you must not fear, my child!'

'Father,' said Judith, 'before I enter the pillar I must see you, Gesta, and the labourers within it. I do not believe for a moment that you will all be able to go in undiscovered, unless I remain standing here. While the soldiers see me before them they may suspect nothing, but they will come near to examine your movements instantly, if they perceive me stir. I beseech you give way to me in this particular; enter yourself; let Gesta enter; let the labourers enter; and then I will come and join you.'

'Thou art fearful of the darkness and uncertainty of the passage,' said Jocenus; 'fie, my daughter! I thought thee stronger of mind, and wiser. At such a moment as this, canst thou catch at ideal fancies, and childish apprehensions? fie—fie!'

The cheek of Judith flushed at her father's ill-deserved reproof, but she did not yield her point.

'Whatever be my motive, dear father, give way to my wish.'

'When I and Gesta are entered, wilt thou come?' asked Jocenus; 'it is absurd to think of letting the labourers enter before thee; they can protect themselves, and force their way, if pressed by necessity, at the knife's point, to the place of escape.'

'I could have wished to see all those who have served us, placed in a condition of safety, before myself,' said Judith, hesitating with pained feelings; 'but when you and Gesta are within the pillar, I will come, since it must be so.'

Jocenus warmly embraced her, his heart strongly beating under the prospect of deliverance. Adroitly he moved round to the orifice, and, suddenly stooping, disappeared. At that minute eight bowmen levelled their arrows to the pillars, where six labourers now stood in formidable strength, determined to cover the escape of their master and mistress; and the hermit advanced, saying aloud—

'In the name of the Great Being, whom you say you acknowledge, I entreat you, speaking for all my brethren, that you save further bloodshed, and make no more useless resistance. Lady, I beg of *you* to be advised by me for your good; but if you will not, or if your father and his people refuse to quit their postures of defiance, I am commanded to tell you that the arrows you see directed hitherward, will be immediately discharged, and not one of you but will be destroyed on the spot you now stand without mercy. The soldiers have exerted unwonted patience and forbearance they say, but they will be put off no longer; therefore yield, or instantly prepare for violence such as no interference, short of miraculous, can avert.'

The reverend man, leaning upon a short staff, spoke with a grave, respectful emphasis, which Judith fully appreciated. His venerable white beard, simple weeds, and the kind concern which his eye express-

ed, all aided the effect his words produced on her mind, and confirmed her in her former resolution. With rapidity she reflected inwardly—

‘I am innocent—perfectly innocent—of all crimes against the laws of this nation, except of the crime of being a Jewess. Why then should I flee like a guilty criminal? I would rather bear the event of a trial before my accusers. I cannot bear to shrink from meeting those who wait to judge me.’

The hermit waited for her reply, while Gesta, who was about to follow Jocenus into the orifice of the pillar, pressed her hand expressively, and whispered—

‘Your father waits, Judith. Are you ready? Linger not an instant, or your chance of escape will be lost!’

‘It is lost,’ said Judith; ‘fly and leave me—I will not avoil my enemies. Hermit,’ she raised her voice, ‘entreat the soldiers to drop their arrows. I have not hitherto opposed their will, and I do not now oppose it.’ She stepped forward, placing her hand on her palfrey, which exhibited signs of pleasure as she caressed it, then prepared to mount. Gesta instantly rushed to her, and urgently, in a low voice, entreated her to keep the promise she had given her father that she would follow him.

‘I promised the soldiers previously that I would not quit their sight,’ said Judith; ‘I *cannot* bring myself to shun a public examination. Ever shall I bless you, Gesta,’ she whispered, ‘if you can only preserve my father, and remain his companion!’

The soldiers and priests now surrounded the horse; and Judith, with the utmost grace, seated herself on the ornamented saddle, drawing her veil entirely over her features.

‘I have got you again, have I?’ cried Garston, with a coarse laugh, stooping his giant frame to speak in Gesta’s ear, and then attempting to remove him to another part of the court. But Gesta was not to be

stirred from the side of the horse; he wrestled with Garston—he struggled as for life and death—he was endued with superhuman might—his form dilated—he foamed at the mouth—and the jail-keeper was compelled to receive the assistance of others in order to subdue him.

‘They may slay me, Judith,’ he cried, ‘but they shall not remove me from your side!’

At length, however, he was bound hand and foot on the ground, and in that condition received several severe kicks. The hermit, and one of the Hebrew labourers, raised his hand to the height of the stirrup of the saddle on which Judith sat, covering her eyes with her hand, and sick with grief and pain of mind, she bent down her head to him, and, unveiling her face, touched softly with her lips his clammy forehead. He raised his eyelids, and tears fell.

‘Farewell, my early companion!’ said she softly: ‘I shall pray for thee to the God of Israel. I know thy love for me. I may, perhaps, see thee no more in the mortal body: but Gesta, when this brief span of painful existence is over—then we shall meet! Till then, we must separate. Do not despond! but oh, think, that though we walk in darkness—though we pass through the furnace—the Lord God can be a light unto us—the Lord God can preserve us, as he preserved of old, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. Be sure thou lookest upward with hope and patience when I am not with thee, and may a holy peace, such as man cannot mar, be distilled like dew upon thy soul!’

Again she pressed her lips to his forehead, and when the hermit had whispered to her to be of good courage, she put her palfrey into motion, and appeared perfectly collected, rode out at the open gates, having with her a small chest beautifully scrolled with brass, and a bundle of raiment, both fastened upon the saddle behind her, and covered with damask cloth.

Keturah had seen this bundle and chest fastened upon the palfrey, after having covered herself with a veil of coarser texture than that her lady wore; and she now turned the head of a neat pony, which she had been permitted to mount, and rode after Judith.

The hermit led the bridle of Judith's palfrey, and priests surrounded it, thus people were reminded that the "Jew's Daughter" was the prisoner of the church, and that they were not to do her any bodily injury, on pain of spiritual penalties. Fear of the church, however, would not have withheld them from receiving her with insulting and cruel language; but the spectacle in the sky, and Myrza's denunciations, in a manner paralysed them; and when she appeared in the main streets of the Jew's quarter, only a few voices were uplifted in triumph, and even those were quickly stilled. The remarkable silence of the so lately turbulent multitude, and their panic-struck attitudes, smit Judith with surprise.

'See, my lady—oh, see—the clouds are on fire!' exclaimed Keturah, attempting to put her pony forward to the side of Judith, in which attempt she was foiled by the hand of a priest, who firmly held her bridle, and bade her "Keep in her place, in the rear of the chief offender; it would be time enough for her to advance on a level with her mistress, when the faggot and stake were before her.'

The damsel shuddered at the cold malignant accents in which these words were pronounced, even more than at the words themselves; but she answered with her former spirit revived, 'That she had heard and knew it to be true, that the worst of all the tribes of the Gentiles, were the priests. There is not to be seen on any hand,' said she, 'a man of what degree soever, who is not moved and terrified at the sight above, excepting you, and two or three others of your fellow-priests. I spy people who have lived in blood, and by blood all their days; yet I find

that they cease to proceed with their barbarous cries, and let us move on by them without contumely, because they are awed by the finger of Jehovah in the sky: but you—who wear the signs of religion—fear nothing that is in heaven or in hell—you—'

'I will tell you, young infidel damsel,' said the priest, 'what from this moment it will be well for you if you do not forget—though there are priests who fear nothing, yet there are priests who can make themselves *fear*; and the less you provoke one of the servants of the pope, the better. Of course, you feel certain that you will be burned alive with your mistress, at last, but before the time of execution, you do not know but many days, perhaps weeks, may have to pass. Now if you wish to escape some extra trials of the instruments of torture which might be made upon your limbs during that period—and I can warrant you such trials would not be of the daintiest description—speak civilly to the priests who come across your way. As to the clouds,' he added, looking up, 'I cannot deny they are of a very portentous, nay, fearful appearance; but let me tell you that it is not any of the Gentiles, as you name the people under the spiritual government of the holy Romish church—it is not any of these people who have cause to tremble at such appearances—it is the Jews of Lincoln, and only the Jews, young infidel damsel, who should tremble; for to them is this spectacle sent, and if they read it rightly, they will learn from it that their doom is sealed, and that the whole of them are devoted to destruction: which destruction will begin with you and your mistress, but will not cease until all that call themselves Hebrews in this city, shall have been hunted from it, or put to death by the sword and by fire!'

Hearing these words, Keturah was scarcely able to sit upon her saddle without fear; but at this moment, the priest's interpretation

of the phenomenon was, in a manner, flatly contradicted by Myrza, who now kneeling on the wall where she had before stood, and pointing to Judith, chaunted aloud a wild measure, which she meant to be received by the people as the ban of Hela, or Death, upon all who should touch the life of the merchant's daughter. The persons, who an hour before had felt persuaded that the spirit of young Sir Hugh had appeared to the abbot, and had demanded the death of Judith as his murderer, now so far forgot that conviction, that they extinguished with haste the flames which they had kindled close to the merchant's house, and even proposed that Judith and the handmaid should be taken back into the court. This sudden change of impulses reached to the very entrance of the house where one, and only one, of the Hebrew labourers; stood with a knife in one hand and a dagger in the other, guarding the orifice in the pillar, with three soldiers standing passively opposite him; neither the merchant nor Gesta were to be seen, and this solitary labourer was the only Hebrew about. Perhaps a dozen military men, in leathern vests and iron caps, might be counted in other parts of the court, but all of them were engaged, more or less, in the same manner as their comrades, that is to say, in watching the progress of the spectacle, and listening to Myrza. The proposal to lead Judith back again into the court, of course met with determined opposition from the priests; but while the people and they were debating the matter, Judith and Keturah were stopped within a few yards of Myrza, and Judith contrived to back her docile animal a few paces, so that she could speak to Keturah without raising her voice.

'Do not be unnecessarily alarmed, my poor girl,' said she; 'I have often heard my father describe such lights as you see playing over the clouds; he has seen them frequently in countries where they are common. It is a fine and an uncommon

sight!' she added, more slowly; and as Keturah looked at her face, she saw that it expressed the most glowing admiration, and that her eye was enlarged, and beaming with imagination.

The darkness of evening was now stealing over the atmosphere, and, as it deepened, the spectacle faded slowly; the clouds altered, and became blended with each other; the sky resumed its natural twilight hue, and the singular lights gradually ceased to appear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JUDITH had been conducted forward to the top of the hill, when a command was sent from the chapter-house that she should be lodged for the present in the castle: thither she was accordingly led with her handmaid. She had heard, from the casual speeches near her, that not only her father, but Gesta, also, had escaped within the pillar: and it was no matter of surprise to her when she found that their escape, so unlooked for, was attributed to supernatural interposition. As Myrza had asserted that Jocusus and his friends were in the care of powerful, invisible beings, the people supposed that the witch had invoked those beings to their assistance. Judith herself was filled with wonder when she reflected upon the sudden, remarkable discovery of the passage—a discovery made just at the moment when Garston had withdrawn his men to a distant part of the court, in order to consult with them, as she now heard, on the best practicable means of taking the Hebrews alive—a discovery so surprisingly available—so miraculously successful! But Judith attributed the event to no other than Divine Providence, and her graceful aspirations ascended to God, to whom she committed her own destiny, implicitly trusting in his goodness.

Little less marvellous than the finding of the passage had been the superstitious irresolution of the soldiers when they ascertained the

merchant's disappearance within it, and saw Gesta forcibly seized from them, and boldly assisted to enter it—when they heard Myrza at the same time denouncing all who attempted to injure the Jews, and threatening the worst evils, as though she were a deligate of the powers of darkness : and especially when they saw in the heavens, as they imagined, a confirmation of her words, and a sign that there were really spiritual influences at work.

When Judith was placed in a cell of the castle keep, alone, (for Keturah was confined separately alone from her) her most anxious thoughts turned toward her father and Gesta. Would the latter survive the injuries he had received ? Would he be capable of making his way with the merchant through the secret passage ?—or supposing that the labourers with him assisted him along, would they really find a safe outlet ? These were the questions which arose with rapidity in her mind. Then the dreadful idea struck her, that the superstitious fears of the soldiers and the mob might subside as quickly as they rose ; that her house might be fired and that the kind domestics yet hidden within it, and perhaps her father and Gesta, with the brave labourers, miserably perish.

'The suspense I must bear,' said she, 'is almost too much for me.' While the words were on her lips, the cell-door was a little opened, and a note was thrown in, which Judith hastily took up and examined by the feeble light of the lamp ; again she saw the seal of Lord Hugh, while within the billet there was the writing of the hermit. No time was left her to read the writing, for footsteps were heard coming near, she hastily concealed her prize, and was presently after ordered into the presence of the abbot. With calm intrepidity she stood before him in the hall of the keep ! still shrouded from head to foot in the full drapery of her veil, and the ends of her rich girdle trailing on

the ground. The abbot had so arranged matters with the authorities of the county, and with the chapter of the clergy which he had called, that the doom of the Hebrews charged with Sir Hugh's murder, was left entirely to his fiat. The earl was present to ratify his sentence, and three stern looking ecclesiastics were prepared to act as witnesses. The case was briefly opened, and as briefly terminated. Judith was condemned to be hung and burnt on the succeeding morning at daybreak.

Up to this time the abbot supposed that Jocenus was taken, and his irritation was great when he learned that the merchant had escaped. He bent his looks upon the ground in moody vexation, then angrily asked the colleague of Garston, who was waiting to take charge of Judith, 'How did Jocenus escape ?' The man stepped forward and replied, 'That there was a stout saxon pillar at the entrance of the Jew's mansion, and the Hebrews gathered around it ; that while the soldiers and priests were gathered back into a distant part of the court, the merchant vanished within this pillar, and that soon afterwards the Jew's deformed nephew was daringly carried off by the same way.' The abbot demanding a fuller explanation, the man continued to say, 'That there were steps hidden within the pillar, but that the unexpected opening of the stone, and the instant escape of the Jews by it, was said to have been caused by Myrza, as the strange sight in the sky had been.'

'But why,' said the abbot, making an impatient movement with his foot and hand, 'was not the pillar completely broken down, and the merchant dragged back.'

'If it please you, lord abbot,' replied the colleague, 'the witch hindered the soldiers by spells. One and all of them—myself and Garston among the number—are ready to swear that they felt their strength taken away on the sudden by her charms.'

'What! was she on the spot?' asked the abbot.

'Yes, your reverence,' replied the colleague, 'and mounted upon the court wall with magic-wand, and spectre-branch, and snake-skin; she openly used each in sight of all the people, making her incantations. She said aloud, more than once or twice, that the Hebrews were protected by powerful spirits which she could command, and she threatened all who should injure them, with their malediction. She declared, in her runic lays, as we were bringing away the condemned lady now present, that all who should touch her life, should bear the dread ban of the witch of the water side.'

'Said she that?' exclaimed the earl, changing his position uneasily. The man interrogated, desirous that the execution of the sentence upon Judith should be delayed awhile, replied with force—

'Indeed my lord baron, she did; and, therefore, I do not think the people will see the lady put to death so hastily. The witch's power none can dispute; and I, for my own part, must be excused from assisting in her punishment at present.'

'I, too,' said the earl, 'would rather not be concerned in the matter. Body of me! it is no light thing to defy Myrza. Let us wait, abbot—let us wait a day or two.'

'Credulous fools!' muttered the abbot; 'to wait is out of the question,' he said aloud. 'My obedience to the young martyr must be perfect, as regards the *time* of performing the act of vengeance, as well as in respect of the act itself. See,' he said, with commanding tones, to Garston's colleague, 'that you let no scruples whatever interfere with your duty to the church; guard your prisoner well, until she is required of you, and take care that she does not escape as the deformed youth did, or your life will be in very imminent jeopardy, let me tell you. Our meeting is concluded.'

He rose, as did the earl and the ecclesiastics; and Judith was about to be withdrawn, when she threw

back the veil from her lovely features, now intensely pale, and said with rising firmness—

'Am I to understand, lord abbot, noble earl, and reverend sirs, that to-night I am to die? Is such the decision of my self-appointed judges?'

'That is my decision,' said the abbot; 'you have been convicted before these persons of sorcery, treason, sacrilege, murder, and the mutilation of the body of a Christian-born child. The blessed martyr himself has appeared to demand your instant death; yet there is one condition upon which your life may be spared for another four and twenty hours.'

'Name the condition, prelate,' said Judith; 'to a person about to die, four and twenty hours is a long period.'

'Confess that your father and yourself are guilty,' said the abbot. Judith's erect figure assumed a posture of uncommon dignity, as she replied—

'No, prelate, no! To all who will hear me I declare my innocence, and I will declare it to the last moment of my life. You have condemned me without law, without equity. Who has seen the spirit of Sir Hugh beside yourself? Is it the English law that persons are to be put to death upon the testimony of a spirit seen by one person only? You say I *enticed* the boy to visit me, I did—as you entice to your monastery any person whose society is agreeable to you. You say you took the body out of the well in my garden; that may be true, but where are your witnesses to strengthen your bare assertions that you had previously seen my cousin throw the body in there? or that you had heard me say I had seen Sir Hugh crucified? It is not fitting that my only accuser should be my only judge. Let others weigh your statements and decide the case, or else let the flimsy veil be thrown aside, and let it appear that you seek, prelate, to destroy me and my father's house, not because I have been

guilty of a dread crime, but because you need the wealth to which I am heiress.'

'As bold and obstinate as her father,' muttered the abbot; who, saying to her, 'maiden, you are not without assurance,' made a sign to the man-at-arms to remove her instantly, and to give orders for her execution.

The first thing Judith did after having been led back to her cell was to recommend herself, in a fervent petition, to the mercy and care of heaven. She then perused the note she had received, a light having been left with her; the words were these:—

'That which I said to you privately as you were on your way hither, I now repeat—*be of good courage!* Providence, though even at the twelfth hour, *will* open a way of deliverance for the injured and amiable daughter of my convert, Claribel. Here I must not say more. Destroy if you can this little billet.'

Judith felt satisfied that at such a time as the present, the hermit would not hold out to her a false hope. Instead, therefore, of arming herself for an almost immediate meeting with the king of terrors in one of his most terrible forms, she sat down on a small iron pallet, and employed herself in endeavouring to surmise what grounds the reverend man had for communicating to her his confident hope. Conjectures arose in her mind clear and disentangled, but they did not penetrate the truth. Again, recalling to her remembrance the conversation that she had heard between Lady Isabella and the hermit in Monks-lane, she came to the conclusion that both were making exertions for her. Now she felt the utmost miseries of a state of suspense. An hour, which she thought would never end, slowly, painfully, passed away; but a distant midnight anthem, which penetrated the window of her cell, calmed her. At all times Judith was thrillingly alive to the poetry of nature and of life, and she could not

hear this without being carried beyond herself; tears trembled beneath the soft fringe of her eyelashes.

'Now,' said she, 'monks are joining in prayer: may their orisons be sincere, and productive of better feelings and dispositions than reign in the breasts of some of their superiors.'

A key was turned in the rude lock of the cell door, and fearful expectation again swept in tumultuous waves over her mind. She hastily veiled herself, and stood up as the abbot entered.

'The passage,' said he, 'through which your father and his supposed nephew were allowed by the credulous people to escape, has been explored, and found to lead, by one outlet at least to a decayed chapel at the bottom of the Jews quarter. Beyond that broken building your friends have not yet been traced.'

Judith neither by motion or exclamation betrayed the joy which thrilled within her. The abbot resumed in the same low, evil-boding tones, he had before used:—

'Another of the damsels who attended you in your days of luxury and pride, is here a prisoner—her name is Belaset. She gave herself up, she says,' (here his accents were ironical,) 'because of the love and esteem she bears to you; of course, she was informed that she must share, with her fellow-servant, in your punishment, and in your infamy.'

'Ah, my unfortunate girl!' exclaimed Judith. She then addressed the abbot earnestly:—'Prelate, you can have nothing to gain by the death of these two maidens. I beseech you set them free! They are not even charged with a crime. One of them is sought in marriage by a rich jeweller of our nation, he will purchase the liberty of his betrothed, and the liberty of her friend, with a large ransom, if you will be merciful and accept it. It is I who am accused, why should these maidens suffer?'

'I will consider the proposal,' said

the abbot, musing—'I will consider it. Perhaps,' he resumed abruptly, 'that same jeweller has harboured in his house those persons for whom there has been made so fruitless a search during the past evening—I mean the servants of you and your father.'

'Our chief servant was slain by the soldiers,' said Judith; 'my two handmaids you have here; five men, who performed the laborious parts of our home-commerce, escaped with my father. Who are the persons sought?'

'Your household was large—you have not named all you employed. It is your purveyor, and cook, and usher, whom we seek.'

'They,' said Judith, colouring as she employed the evasion, 'were not regularly resident with us—they may have fled to safer towns than this.'

'They may have done so,' said the abbot, 'or, I say again, they may have been harboured by this jeweller—his movements must be looked after.'

Judith, a little time before, had derived no inconsiderable portion of satisfaction from the reflection that Leoni was absent from Lincoln at present, and not involved in the immediate danger of her father and herself, and she had trusted that he would escape altogether the enmity of the Christians. But now her spirits sank as she feared she had drawn the abbot's attention upon him, while at the same time she was revived to learn that the three domestics, bidden in the under part of her house, were still undiscovered.

'I did once apprehend that they were concealed somewhere in your mansion,' resumed the abbot; 'for if pillars had contained secret passages, so, I thought, might walls and floors. But it is fortunate for them, as regards their present safeties, that they are not there, for in a few minutes not one plank in the building, will be left unconsumed by fire.'

This dreadful intelligence Judith had almost anticipated, but she

started as she heard it, and the cell seemed too close for her to breathe in. The abbot knew well, she felt convinced, that friends of hers were in the burning house, for he said, in a particular tone—

'I was told that shrieks were heard in the interior of the house shortly after it was fired. Do you think the report correct?'

Judith made no reply, but sat down on the edge of the iron bedstead, for her limbs refused support to her shivering frame. The abbot looked at her with some compunctious visitings of conscience, which proved too transitory to be of benefit to her. In his secret mind he admired the steadfast courage with which she had hitherto borne her own danger; and he was not insensible to her unselfish pleadings for the damsels in his power, or unmoved by her agony for the fate of those domestics immolated in the funeral pile of her home. He was not moved, however, from his dark purposes; and, having given her time to assume a little calmness, which she was far from feeling, he informed her that her execution would be delayed, but only until the twelfth hour after sunrise, and then left the cell as abruptly as he had entered it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE door being once more closed, Judith sank upon the straw, and images of the utmost horror rapidly chased each other in her mind. That vividness of imagination which had formerly been to her a source of so much exquisite delight, was now the fountain of exquisite torment. The lamp shortly went out, and left her in complete darkness, except where a few feeble gleams of starlight entered the small grated window. The wind had changed to a colder quarter, and blew in between the bars with a shrill sound, there being no glass to hinder its entrance. In the cold and the gloom it was no wonder that Judith found her fortitude forsake her, that every hope seemed to vanish, and that the uncertainties of her

own fate, and the homeless condition of her father, appeared in the blackest colours. She wondered she had given credence to the hermit's note—wondered that she had had so much faith in Lady Isabella's exertions for her—wondered that she had dreamt of being again at liberty, and of her name being cleared from its present stain; in short, she resigned herself to despair, and believed that both herself and her father were utterly lost. In the midst of all, the destruction of her home, and the dreadful death of the purveyor and his companions, was keenest misery to her. At one time she exclaimed aloud—'All my bower gone! gone past recall! the abode of my childhood, the place where all my imaginations, all my affections, had started into birth, had grown, and entwined themselves with fibres strong as life—gone! The home in which I have eaten, and slept, and loved, and dreamed, and sang, and struck the lyre of poetry—gone! Is it—can it be true? Yesterday it was standing in all its beautiful completeness, and now—is it in ashes! shuddering, she remembered the *human* ashes buried beneath those ruins, and wildly repeated the words—'Miserable friends!—sacrificed for me—sacrificed for me!'

The gaoler hearing her voice came in to see if all was right, and on being petitioned for a light, brought one with more civility than she had expected. She complained of cold, and he presently fetched a bundle of straw, which, with the help of his pike, he stuffed between the window bars. For this kindness, Judith rewarded him with a piece of silver, as she had not neglected to conceal some money about her person. The man signed a cross upon the coin before lodging it in his doublet, then thanked her and said—

'Royston, who keeps the county prisons with Garston, paid me to see you comfortable. Not that I have any objection to take from you the value of a can of wine or two—always providing I get no witch's

pennies given to me. But as I was saying, Royston made me take oath to tell no one that he was your friend; and he gave me a mark to be obliging to you—so if you please, now the abbot and the earl are gone to bed, and the garrison are all quietly snoring, you shall have a few sticks lighted on that dusty hearth in the corner, and I will bring you a little table, with a tankard of wine, and the remnant of a quarter of venison to cheer your heart.'

Judith willingly accepted his offer as regarded the fire, but declined the wine, and the remnant of venison. She groaned as she sought warmth from the blaze which the gaoler kindled, for it unfortunately assisted her fancy to realize its dreadful pictures of the burning of her home. The crackling of the wood, and the brightness of the sparks, were anything but cheerful to her now, and her instant impulse was to press her hand upon her eyes and her ears. But the number of ideas of terror, of grief, and of anxiety, which pressed upon her, prevented her from being overwhelmed by any one in particular, and her feelings being divided, became less distractingly intense than they would otherwise have been. She questioned the gaoler on many points, and he answered her with apparent freedom. She learnt from him that her house had been ransacked by priests, and fired at their instigation, that some children had seen her father and other Jews going toward the river, across a meadow, and that it was reported they had sailed away in a ship that left its anchorage in Lincoln about that time. The man then spoke of the preparations for her execution.

'Royston was first ordered by the abbot to see you hung in the castle ballia,' said he, 'but the earl was afraid of Myrza the Witch, and gave a denial; then the abbot would have had you tortured in this keep, and made to confess, but Sir Gervase, the earl's grandson, was taken worse, and the earl still said nay. I overheard him swearing loudly to the

abbot that he had had no part of your wealth, and he would not have ill-luck light on him by helping in your death. There were quite high words between my lord-baron and my lord-abbot—I believe there were several matters of difference between them.'

Judith lost not a word of the gaoler's communications, and once more her spirits fluctuated on the side of hope. He bade her good-night, hoped she would have a little comfortable sleep, and left her—not to repose, but to meditations very different from her former ones. This colleague of Garston's, whom the gaoler called Royston, had paid money to purchase civil treatment for her—What could be his motives? She had noticed something peculiar, but she fancied not altogether agreeable, in his manner toward her, both when she was taken prisoner and when she was sentenced. It was he who had obtained permission from her rough captors for her to ride instead of walk hither. That he was incurring a risk by serving her was evident by the oath he had drawn from the gaoler—Yet why should he, who, until this past day could never have seen her, and of whom she knew nothing, except that he was a Christian, and in the pay of her most powerful enemies, why, Judith asked herself again, with prudent anxiousness, should he take such pains to oblige her, and incur a risk of magnitude to do her benefit? Then she blamed herself for suspecting him of ill motives, since she could see none which there was any reasonable foundation for supposing that he had entertained. The unfavourable impression which his manners had made upon her she charged upon her own sensitiveness, and thus quieted herself as far as Royston was concerned.

She was thinking of the probabilities in her favour which the division between the earl and abbot opened, when the subdued tone of a bugle sounded nearly under the window of her cell, and in the deep

silence of the hour she could hear the movements of horses amid the interchange of voices. These sounds lasted no more than a minute, and she was just falling back into the posture of reflection from which she had been roused, as the cell-door, a third time, opened. It was Royston, who entered on tiptoe, bearing a large mantle on his arm, and followed by another stranger.

'Lady,' said the former, 'we are come to rescue you from death, and to convey you to a place where you will be well taken care of.'

Rising, and endeavouring to control the joyful pulsations of her heart, Judith asked, 'To what place they were going to convey her, and if it was the Lady Isabella who had sent them?'

Royston looked at his companion, and his companion looked down on the ground, and then the former said—'Perhaps it might be the Lady Isabella, but no questions could be answered until they were clear of the castle.'

Again a suspicion of Royston's motives in befriending her awakened her fears, and she refused to quit the cell. It seemed to her more tolerable to remain where she was, expecting the worst, than to trust herself with these men, in the dead of night, to go she knew not whither. There was an air of levity about both Royston and his companion which she could not at all understand, but from which she shrank with great dislike.

'We mean you well, lady, don't we Brazen-nose?' said Royston to the other, with an half-wink of the eye. 'It's very hard that you should doubt us, after we have taken so much trouble to save you.'

'Very hard indeed,' echoed the individual addressed, the middle feature of whose face was particularly large, and certainly of a brassy colour; at the same time he replied to the wink with an equally refined puckering up of one cheek.

'I am grateful to you for the trouble you have taken,' said Judith, 'but I am determined not to

go from hence until I am publicly acquitted, or until the dreadful hour of my death is come.'

'To that we have but a few words to say,' said Royston, coolly. 'You *must* go with us, and we can lose no more time here talking about it, or we shall have some unpleasant interruption.'

'*Must* go with you!' repeated Judith, stepping backwards from them in alarm.

'Tis even so,' said Royston, with an insolent smile, unfolding the cloak which he took from the arm of his companion and approaching her with it. 'Let us have no nonsense about the matter. Put this on, and draw it over your head. Your own palfrey, which you know I was the means of saving from your father's stables for you, is waiting below, and your mails are both mounted by this time, expecting you.'

'My maids!' exclaimed Judith, now more than ever surprised, and dubious whether her compliance with the men's wishes would ultimately work her harm or good. 'Why will you not tell me, sirs,' she said, 'the meaning of your interference for us? Why will you not say whither it is you intend to conduct us?'

'And why do you fear to trust yourself with us, since your two damsels will be with you?' said Royston. 'Surely nothing worse can befall you in the place you are going to than you would meet here were you to stay.'

A second low bugle-note, just under the cell window, sounded, and both men exclaimed impatiently that they could not stay another instant. Judith offered a vain resistance as they endeavoured to wrap the mantle about her form, until fearing worse treatment if she continued to oppose them, and having been told that if she made the least effort to cry out they would gag her, she yielded, and walked between them down to the keep-postern, through which the three were permitted to pass by the warder stationed there.

They descended the steep round hill on which the keep was raised to a height commanding a view of all the surrounding country, without interruption from the night-watch, who seemed perfectly to understand what was going forward. Judith then saw in the darkness of the court several horses, and two muffled figures, which she conjectured to be Belaset and Keturah.

On being led to them she was ordered to refrain from speaking a word, which she did, but silently embraced both, while they were weeping and trembling under the idea that they were going to their death. The maidens rode one behind Royston and one behind his companion, Judith being allowed to sit alone on her own palfrey, a little in advance of the men, that she might not escape.

The castle walls were left far behind, and the Jews' quarter was passed. Judith saw there the still burning ruins of her home, and heard the sobs and smothered exclamations of her damsels behind, whose eyes were fastened on the same dismal object. In Judith's eyes were no tears: from her lips came no sound of grief; but she looked up at the vaulted heavens above her, which contained the throne of the righteous Judge of the earth, and appealed to him in mute agony.

The valley was crossed—the opposite hill was ascended; Royston then stopped the three horses on the brow of an eminence above the level of the road, and pointed out to his comrade the flames rising from the pile of ruins which was all now left of the stately mansion of Jocenus, and the houses that had been situated nearest to it. Belaset wept aloud, and Keturah covered her eyes to shut out the dreadful sight, but Judith threw back the mantel from her head, and, sitting forward in her saddle, with hands clasped, gazed unwinkingly on the sad spectacle. The narrow winding valley was at their feet, the city beyond, surrounded with extensive for-

tifications, reposed on a bold slope, crowned by the shadowy outlines of the cathedral, and by the stern battlements of the castle. The morning was about to break ; the stars were covered by a thin mist, which hindered the downward progress of their light, and made them appear indistinct. The spot where the declining fire was which the party were observing, might be half a mile off, and its unequal flare, contrasted with the general mistiness and darkness of the surrounding objects, was a highly picturesque sight.

'On—on!' exclaimed Royston, turning his horse so suddenly that Belaset who was seated behind him, uttered a cry of fear. 'Come, princess of the Hebrews,' said he, laughing, to Judith, put forward that incomparable little animal of yours—let it practice one of its handsome canters—make its hoofs strike fire from every flint you meet—for in an hour we must be under the roof where your friends wait for you.'

Judith said not a word, but put her palfrey into motion, and rode at as rapid a pace as the bad state of the narrow gloomy road would permit, followed close by the other two horses and their four riders. Glad was she to see the first rays of light spreading out from the east, and when a rosy tint began to edge the meeting borders of the level fens and the sky, she felt her heart beat lighter in her bosom, and the horrors she had passed through, and the horrors she anticipated, seemed no more than the unreal phantasms of dreams from which she had just awakened ;—but this respite was no more than momentary.

'Stop, lady—you must turn off to your right and cross the marsh!' exclaimed Royston. Judith checked her horse, and looked in the direction he had named. The whole face of the country was cheerless in the extreme ; one wide waste presented itself on every hand, without a tree or boundary of any description and completely inundated

by water. For more than a quarter of an hour since they had left the road the horses had been wading in thin, floating mud, up to their ancle bones.

'I can scarcely proceed at all,' said Judith ; 'and to cross the marsh on the side you mention is quite impossible ; the water is evidently far deeper there than it is in the part where we now are, and by the appearance of the surface. I should be led to conclude that there were many pits and hollows about.'

The men began to swear, and stopped their horses, perplexed.

'There was hardly an inch deep of wet all the way across to the baron's gate the day before yesterday,' said Royston to his companion, whose name was Gower, 'there must have been a fresh pouring in from the sea since then. What's to be done, Brazen-nose, hey ?'

'We must cross to be sure,' was the grumbled response.

'But how ?' said Royston. 'How?—that is the point. You know there is many an ugly gaping hole in the ground between here and the baron's den.'

'Holes, or no holes, we must cross,' said the other—'so here goes ;' and, striking the sides of his horse with his armed heels, he plunged forward into the dangerous fosse.

'O, my dearest lady ! my dearest lady !' shrieked Keturah, who was upon the same horse with him, 'we shall certainly perish—I know we shall ! Heaven take us to the dwellings of Abraham ! All is over for us here ! Farewell, dear Belaset !—may you be blessed !'

The horse made steady exertions to go through the stagnant liquid, which grew deeper as it advanced, and was loaded with mud and weeds and in a short time it reached the very midst of the marsh in safety, but having only its head and the top of its back above water. Royston now insisted upon Judith's following.

She remonstrated in vain upon

the extreme peril of the attempt, finding him obstinate, she resigned herself, and urged on her delicate Spanish steed, which snorted, and at first seemed to understand the jeopardy of its situation.

Royston pressed after her with the terrified Belaset, splashing through the mire. They went on a hundred yards without any accident occurring, more than one fall of Royston's horse owing to the treacherous nature of the footing, and he instantly pulled up the animal without even himself or Belaset losing their seats, and proceeded another hundred yards. He then stopped and exclaimed—

'What is Gower about, that he stands still in the wet like a sleeping duck? Why does he not drive on? By lance and spurs, he turns the head of the beast hitherwards!—No—he is only altering his tack a little. I suppose he suspected some pitfall at hand. Now he pushes on again. That is well. Come, lady drive forward—no lagging! We are in the marsh and must cross it.'

The feet of Judith were covered by the water, and when she got near the centre of the marsh she was immersed almost to the knees. Nothing could be more appalling than the prospect before her.

'Bear me up well, gallant creature,' said she, patting her palfrey's head; 'be true now to thy unfortunate mistress; thou mayest never again have to carry her—this may be the last time—the last time, my gallant horse—so do thy duty well.'

The beautiful animal tossed its long white mane and tail above the dreary flood, and its fine expressive eyes beamed with fire and feeling as if it understood the words of its despairing mistress.

A shriek from Keturah rang awfully over the terrible solitude. One instant the maiden was seen stretching out her arms toward Judith, in the next she was gone;—a void was on the place where she had been.

'Saints save us!' exclaimed Royston; 'Gower has sunk into one of the holse !'

'Oh God of my fathers, have mercy on us!' cried Judith, looking stunned.

'Keturah!—Keturah!—Keturah!' screamed Belaset, deliriously. The frantic call of affection passed over the fatal spot, but produced no reply. Then Judith, inspired by an impulse more mighty than the instinct of self-preservation, drove her palfrey forward, utterly regardless of her own safety. She reached the place where Keturah, with the horse she was upon and its male rider, had gone down. No trace of a living being was to be discovered. Ghastly was the silence that prevailed! Royston came to the same spot.

'Go not an inch further,' he said, hoarsely, looking at the green scum which had closed over his comrade and the Jewish damsel, 'or instant death will swallow you up too.'

Again Belaset wildly called on the name of Keturah, and receiving no answer but the cries of the startled wild-fowl, which flew by in large flocks, fell from the saddle in a fainting state. Royston's levity was over, so was his coarse unfeelingness; he raised the maiden to the forepart of his saddle, and supported her in his arms with every mark of delicacy.

At this distressing period, the distant figure of a fenman was seen slowly moving on stilts above the level of the marsh. Royston hallooed for assistance, and a second figure having joined the first, both came nearer, then stopped, and shouted in reply. Royston again hallooed still louder to make them sensible of his critical situation. They now slowly approached, guiding their tall stilts with surprising dexterity. They stopped a second time when about fifty yards off, and called out in rude, uncouth Saxon the meaning of which we shall translate—

'What ho! Who are you at the edge of the great marsh pit without a guide? Come back, if you would not be sucked into the gap!'

'Turn your palfrey, lady,' said

Royston to Judith; 'let us go to the boors, they will guide us safe through the fen.'

'Endeavour to bring them here,' said Judith, 'they may direct us how to save our friends.'

'Impossible,' said Royston, shaking his head gloomily. 'However, if you please, I will see what the boors say;' so saying he shouted to the fenmen that some of his party had disappeared about the place where he stood, and asked their aid to search for them if it was thought possible that they might be found.

'You will disappear too,' was the answer, 'if you stay much longer where you are, for the flood is pouring down from the uplands as we never saw it pour down before all the forty years we have been in the fens. This part of the level lies very low, and is never safe for man or beast, even at the best times; and a season like this it is madness to go on it.'

There were no means whatever to be obtained for rescuing Keturah and Gower from their dreadful grave in which they had been so instantaneously swallowed up alive.

Judith, convinced that all hope and effort were in vain, when Royston had again spoken to her, begging her not to linger, turned away overwhelmed, and, guided by the fenmen, she soon found herself on firmer soil. The horse's sides and legs gradually emerged from the chilling flood until their hoofs were barely covered. Before long, an irregularly built and completely isolated building, called the Boor's Den, appeared, surrounded by the fosse to the very foot of the oak palisading which enclosed it. Judith gave but an indifferent glance to its bare and straggling outline, which was unshaded by a single tree, and, like the houses of her people, was devoid of that lofty and martial appearance usual to the Norman dwellings of that day. The uncouth aspect of the fenmen, who were now by her side, also failed to attract her attention; she took no notice of their wild visages, or of

the tight jerkings of sheep-skin with the wool on, which was the only clothing of their ungainly figures.

Royston blew a horn that hung suspended to a small gate in the massive palisades, and a man, in the dress of a nobleman's doorwarder, after drawing back a number of bolts within, answered the signal by his appearance in front of the open wicket.

'How now,' said he to Royston, 'you are later than I expected. Why what has been the matter—have you not come round by the long way at the marsh head?'

'The marsh head!' exclaimed Royston. 'No—I know no other way hither than straight across the middle of the marsh, and by that I have come—and a pretty job I have had of it. Gower, and one of the Jewesses, are drowned in the main pit yonder, where you see that weedy rising in the waters.'

'You don't say so! Gower drowned!'

'He sunk, with his horse, and the Jewess maiden that sat behind him, in a moment. They were even gone before you could have spoken their names.'

'It makes my hair stand on end,' said the warder, 'to hear of Gower cut off so suddenly! No time for confession or absolution! Holy St. Peter! and what makes it worse he was not exactly about an errand suitable for a dying hour. 'Tis a sad hearing! I pray St. Peter he may not be troubled in purgatory! You have gone through many a piece of wickedness with him, Royston. You must pay for some masses for the rest of his soul.'

'With all my heart,' said Royston. 'But where are the people of the household? They must take this swooning damsel from my saddle before I can alight.'

'Here they come,' said the warder, waving his hand within the wicket to hasten their approach.

Four vassals attired alike in morning suits, suitable to an establishment of rank, directly came out,

and two of them supported Belaset, now partially recovered, across the palisades to the portal of the house, which appeared low and unornamented, but spacious and strong. Royston sprang down from his horse and assisted Judith from her palfrey with looks of real compassion.

'How do you find yourself, lady?' he inquired.

Her look of deep wretchedness, as she gazed across the fatal marsh, was a sufficient answer, but a more decisive evidence of her state followed that look. She found that she was unable to support herself to the house. Shivering fits were coming on with violence; her limbs felt congealed and heavy so that they refused motion; a dreadful sickness overcame her senses; she gasped; and, before assistance could be rendered her, the tremendous evils, and miseries, and sorrows of the world, with all its dark apprehensions, were passed from Judith for the present into utter oblivion.

'Bid the maidens who are to have charge of the Jewess lady and her damsel,' said Royston, loudly, to the vassals crowded about the senseless sufferer. 'Get dry garments and a good fire for them; they are both ill with cold and wet, to say nothing of the fright they have had. A warm drink, also, will be good for them. They have tasted little, I'll swear, the last twelve hours.'

'They will be taken care of, never fear,' said one of the liveried vassals, who helped to convey Judith into certain apartments that had been previously prepared for her reception.

The fenmen, after describing to the warder the position in which they had discovered Royston and the lady, received a reward for guiding the perilled persons hither, then went away on their stilts to pursue their employment, which was to search for the most frequented haunts of the ducks, and the other fowl which congregated in such numerous flocks about those wild districts.

Two hours after Prince Edward rode up to the same wicket, in company with a knight of his own age, conducted by a boor of the fens, mounted without saddle or bridle on one of the half-tamed horses which were plentiful in the country. They had come round the head of the marsh, which was perfectly in a safe condition, and had consequently escaped all disaster.

In the court, the prince spoke for some minutes with the warder of the gate, and pleasure, surprise, and vexation, were by turns expressed in his looks and exclamations:—

'What a fool must Royston have been to venture that way!' he exclaimed. 'By my father's head, he deserved to drown as well as Gower! And you say she is ill?' he asked, glancing up to the broad and low lattices of that wing of the house in which Judith was.

'A leech of her own infidel tribe is with her, your highness, and says he is confident she cannot recover. She has an ague, he says, the worst he ever saw, besides a fever in the head.'

The prince muttered something apart to the knight who was with him, and then entered the house. The ill accounts he had received without were confirmed by the persons who had been attending on Judith, who informed him that she was in extreme danger, and that it was hardly possible she could survive many hours. After waiting an hour, however, he learnt that the symptoms which had led them to expect an immediate fatal result, were considerably abated, and in the course of the succeeding night this favourable report became exchanged for one yet more favourable. The following morning she was still suffering a regular return of the ague fits, and remained insensible to all surrounding objects, but the leech anticipated an ultimate recovery. Belaset tended her mistress with unremitting affection, and as the damsel became aware of the nature of their present situation, she almost hoped that Judith would not recover.

feeling satisfied that it would only be to endure greater trials and miseries than she had yet borne.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE destruction of the mansion of the Hebrew merchant, his flight, and the capture of his daughter, with her removal from the castle, soon became known to Lady Isabella Grosteste. Immediately after hearing of these occurrences she was closeted with the hermit for at least an hour, and when he left her she hastened to put on the close head-veil and upper mantle of her religious habit, then proceeded to her brother's private study adjoining the palace scriptorium, in which the monks of St. Mary's cathedral painted their curious missals, copied ancient manuscripts, composed legends for minstrels, studied languages, and recorded the events which occurred from day to day in the diocese.

The sun shone into the bishop's apartment with diminished light through the thick painting of a window unusually rich in ornaments and graceful in form. At the upper end of the room, Grosteste, in plain black weeds, occupied a chair elevated by a step above the floor; some clean branches of wood were burning on shining handirons on a hearth near him, and over the hearth fretted stonework rose in elegant pinnacles, each pinnacle a cross, each cross bearing a tiptoe angel uplifting a golden candlestick, in which was fitted a lighted wax taper.

At the back of the bishop's lofty seat was now the Lady Isabella and her maidens; a tapestried stool had been placed for her by his side, but she stood leaning on the top of his chair throughout the whole of the following scene.

The walls of the room were hung with rich scarlet hangings, and the floor covered with a costly cloth, that had been elaborately wrought in pictures with worsteds of different colours by the Lady Isabella's maidens. On one side of the room was an altar for the bishop's private

devotions, covered with a superb cloth of gold that had been embroidered by the Lady Isabella; there, stood a golden crucifix, and wax lights in clusters resting in golden candlesticks; over all the apartment stretched a gilded roof, vaulted in slender ribs and arches, surprisingly perforated and chiselled so as to represent fruits, and flowers, intermixed with angels and saints, crosses and mitres, while in the centre the episcopal arms were conspicuous.

Prince Edward sat at a table covered with exquisite embroidery-work, which was placed in front of the bishop: he was in travelling attire, splashed with the mud of the fens, which he had not long left. A high stand, furnished with every appurtenance for writing, and bearing a silver cross at each end, was before him.

At another end of the same table, and leaning his elbow on it, while his face was half concealed by his hand, sat Lord Hugh, in a mourning mantle; and by the fourth side of the table, facing him, stood the deformed Gesta.

'Sister,' said the bishop, looking up in her face and laying his hand in hers as it rested on the top of the chair, and pressing it warmly as if he were excited, 'you have just come in time to hear some curious disclosures regarding our lordly abbot of Crowland, as he would fain have himself to be called, who is dispensing death on the seat of justice here in Lincoln to Jews and Gentiles.'

'I have just had with me,' said the Lady Isabella, 'the worthy hermit, who dwells by the swan-pools below our city; he informed me that the young man who lived with Jocenus the merchant as his nephew, and who, it was supposed, had been executed for the murder of Lord Hugh's confessor, had just surrendered himself to you. On making inquiry I found that you were about to examine him privately. I hoped that you would admit me, as I felt curious to hear what he had to say—hence it is you see me here.'

'Thou art welcome, Isabella. This

is not a place of judgment. I am merely giving the young man, as you heard, a private and impartial hearing—he requested it very urgently, and I did not see fit to deny him. Lord Hugh, of course, is concerned to know all that he can concerning the mysterious losses he has suffered; I felt it incumbent on me to request his presence; and as for Prince Edward, who has just arrived at the palace, his grace has especial reasons only known to himself, he avers, for desiring to be present. But you have come in time to hear some curious disclosures, sister—very curious disclosures indeed, regarding our new abbot of Crowland. Proceed, master Gesta.’

Lady Isabella looked narrowly at the latter; his deformity, his cadaverous countenance, did not prejudice her against him. She looked beyond external disadvantages. He spoke in his usual harsh tones, which his late sufferings had made still harsher, and also peculiarly hollow; at times, when his subject overcame him, they were lost in his swelling throat, and became inaudible, or rose to a singularly high key, strained and sharp, thrilling the listening auditors and awakening the most exciting emotions.

‘My lord bishop,’ said he, ‘if it please you I will recommence my painful story, that you may have the whole before you without confusion.’

‘Do so—do so,’ said Grosteste. ‘Now, sister,’ he added, speaking lower, and again looking hastily up in her face, ‘mark what is coming. You will hear, I know you will, that which will surprise you.’

‘I can hear nothing evil of the abbot,’ thought the lady, ‘that will surprise me;’ but she said nothing aloud, only listened very attentively to Gesta’s words.

‘I am not a Jew, though I come before you still wearing the Hebrew badge—and might I live a hundred years longer I would still wear it, for I love the people. I ask no favour from you as a Christian. I am a Jew in heart, though not by birth.

My mother, I have lately discovered, is no other than the Witch Myrza; and my father, who is dead, was—but what he was, or who he was, can be of no present moment. I have lived twenty-five years in the house of Jocenus, owned as his nephew, respected as his son. I now can boast of that time—and I rejoice that I share in that merchant’s undeserved sorrows. I rejoice that I am calumniated with him—that I am accused with him; and happy—happy—should I be if I could lay down my life for him!’

Lord Hugh drew his hand more over his face, and sighed.

‘But the prior—the prior,’ interrupted the bishop; ‘let us hear what he had to do with the confessor’s death. Take heed what you say—speak nothing but the truth, man.’

The prince fixed his eye on Gesta with a look of thought and investigation, rather than of curiosity. The latter proceeded:—

‘Very shortly after Lady Helen de Gant died I visited Myrza. I was in a very discontented, gloomy state of mind, and sought her aid, with the forlorn hope of obtaining certain objects to which my heart aspired. The prior of Icanno was there; he spoke with me; he learnt my errand; he persuaded me that he could show me some instant means for gaining my wishes, if I would swear to keep his counsel inviolate. I did so with conditions that now release me from my oath. He then told me that the confessor of Lady Helen had brought Lord Hugh’s infant son to his priory with a box of gold, and that the former intended to set out for Palestine, to make search for Lord Hugh, leaving the gold and the child in his care.’

‘You hear that, sister,’ whispered the bishop, looking up in her face, his countenance all anticipative of what was to follow next. ‘The gold was to be left behind—you hear that.’

Lord Hugh now looked full at Gesta, who continued:—

‘The prior next proposed to me to follow the confessor at a distance,

and to destroy him in some uninhabited part of the fens. I dared not seem to shrink from the horrid proposal. I pretended to listen with acquiescence to his plans for the perpetration of the foul act, and the mode and the place were pointed out to me.'

The shuddering Lord Hugh here rose up hastily, and walked across the room, then stood listening at a further distance. Exclamations of horror were uttered by the Lady Isabella and her maidens. Gesta went on:—

'Myrza by some means understood the nature of my conference with the prior, and she warned me most emphatically against being deluded by him. She besought me to abstain from the dreadful deeds to which he would impel me. To her I owe it that I am clear of blood! I followed the confessor on his way out of Lincoln; I kept on his track until we were in a district where no house appeared, except only one hut belonging to two men, one of them the keeper of a rabbit warren, the other a ferryman on the Witham. I saw him enter the hut, and bent my steps to the same place. He found a free welcome, and remained there the night. I did the same. Shortly after I had entered, a third stranger sought shelter beneath the humble roof—he was a friar, and, like the confessor and myself, met with hospitable treatment. The friar's movements were to me suspicious, and I watched him attentively. The room in which the peasants put us for the night contained three straw pallets on the floor, and on one of these the confessor lay down to rest. I took possession of another, but purposely remained awake in order to observe the friar. I heard him whispering a long time with one of the peasants in the adjoining room, and feared that the prior, doubtful of my real participation in his detestable schemes, had hired this friar to murder both me and the confessor, and that the latter was now endeavouring to obtain the assistance of

the peasant in order to accomplish his object. Under this impression I awoke the confessor, informed him in few words of the prior's design against him, and of the danger which then threatened him. The good man was bewildered—he scarcely knew whether to believe me or not. When I urged him to escape with me from the window, he trembled and hesitated; the precious moment was wasted by him in doubts and fears—the next saw the villain of a friar in the room with us. 'I thought you had both been asleep an hour ago,' said he, seeing us sitting up and talking together. 'I heard you lie down, what has made you rise up again?' We did not feel inclined for rest, I answered; the beds are none of the best, and this pious father has many entertaining stories of the miracles of your catholic saints to tell. I could very well wile away an hour or two listening to him. 'Jews are not wont to like such stories,' said the friar. 'You seemed both of you weary enough I thought when you left the other room.' I saw the confessor tremble as he heard the sinister words;—there was cause for trembling. The cowed murderer went near to his intended victim. I kept myself prepared—but on the alert as I was, I could not prevent the sudden blow with a poignard, which the friar successfully aimed at the confessor's neck.'

'And it was thus the good father perished!' exclaimed Lord Hugh. 'Oh, dreadful story!' Gesta continued:—

'I grappled with the destroyer, overcame him, and, in self-defence, snote his weapon into his own heart. The peasants heard the deadly struggle, and rushed in; two bleeding bodies were before them on the floor. I was unhurt; we took the confessor up, and assisted each other in endeavouring to stop the flow of blood from his wound; he was not dead, but his recovery appeared to me hopeless. The friar's life was quite extinct, and it was deemed advisable to bury him at

once, which we did, in the middle of night, at the back of the cottage. The confessor was fortunately able to speak and to clear me from any doubts which the peasants might have entertained to my prejudice. He told them that I had waked him before the friar came in, that I had acquainted him of his peril, and had sought to help him to escape.'

'Where are those peasants?' exclaimed Lord Hugh, returning to the table. 'It is fitting they be examined, and that speedily. Unfortunate priest!' he ejaculated, sighing; 'thy goodness to my lady and my son met with a miserable reward!'

'I will undertake to bring one of the peasants at any hour before you, my Lord Hugh,' said the prince, to every one's great astonishment.

'You, Prince Edward!' reiterated the bishop.

Lord Hugh caught at the words of the prince:—'Your grace,' said he, with quickness, 'perhaps knows more than we of this matter. If it be so, I pray you speak out, and relieve my doubtful mind.'

'Let the recital be proceeded with,' said the prince; 'I would hear all that this Gesta has to reveal before I say ought that may criminate any one.'

'Go on,' cried the bishop to Gesta.

'During the rest of that night,' resumed Gesta, 'the confessor continually spoke of the child he had left in the priory of Icanno. Though enduring great anguish with his wound he never once complained of his own fate, but only troubled himself for little Sir Hugh. 'Oh, what will become of the boy in the house of that treacherous prior!—Oh, what will become of him?—Oh, that I could live for his sake!' These were some of his mournful expressions, which melted both me and the peasants.'

Lord Hugh sat down and covered his eyes, from which tears were dropping.

'At daylight,' Gesta resumed, 'I returned to the house of my sup-

posed uncle, and one of the peasants produced a leech to minister to the confessor. For two days I was closely engaged with the merchant's affairs, at the end of the second day I set out to the hut. On my way thither I was met by one of the peasants. How is the priest, I asked; the reply was, 'He is dead. I left him with the leech early yesternoon, and did not return till midnight, for I had been at Sleaford fair with my rabbits. As soon as I went in the leech told me he was dead. Hearing the peasant say this,' continued Gesta, 'my suspicions were again excited. I feared that the prior had had the wounded confessor carried off alive into a confinement that might prove worse than death.'

'Why, was not the body in the hut?' demanded Lord Hugh.

'No, my lord,' replied Gesta, 'it was carried away in a litter by two monks, according to the peasant's account of the leech's statement.'

'You have told us that there were two men belonging to the hut,' said the bishop, 'where was the second of them when the body was removed? Was he absent, too?'

'On the Witham with his ferry-boat, as I was told,' replied Gesta.

'Where is the leech?' inquired Lord Hugh.

Gesta replied that he had been at some pains to make inquiries, and had learned that the same man, a Jew, had been employed by the abbot to translate, in the chapter-house, Hebrew letters, written by Jocenus and his daughter to their rabbins and principal friends. He had also discovered that Aaron, as the leech was named, now dwelt in the castle, and attended the sick bed of the earl's grandson, Sir Gervase.'

'Let him be brought hither at once!' cried Lord Hugh, moving to the door to give orders to a page in waiting.

'Not yet,' interrupted both the bishop and the prince. 'Let us hear all this man has to say, and we may then better judge how to act.'

'Afterwards I had an interview with the prior,' said Gesta, 'and told him that the confessor and his second messenger, the friar, were both dead and both buried. I remember his exclamations at receiving the tidings, which seemed to give him the highest satisfaction:—'My good stars prevail!' cried he. 'They were both in my way. May all those who obstruct my course quickly become as they are! Jew, you are the only individual living possessed of the secret of the confessor's disappearance!—you only know who holds the young Sir Hugh's inheritance! Beware, lest a word or look of yours betray me! Earth has not a spot in which you would be safe if I suspected you! I shall give it out that the priest took the gold and the title-deeds of Lady Helen's lands with him on his journey toward the Holy Land; and it will be very strange if I cannot fill rumour's busy mouth with a story of his having been robbed and murdered, or drowned, on the way.'

'Hear you that, sister Isabella?' whispered the bishop energetically, again putting his hand on hers upon the chair top, and pressing it with sudden heat. 'Hearest thou that? I knew what our abbot of Crowland was in his heart. A goodly overseer is he of the Master's sheep—is he not?'

The lady's features were nearly covered with the lawn veil, which sat close like a hood on her head, drooping over her forehead; she said nothing, and poorly were her feelings interpreted by the sigh which she breathed.

'And while you spoke with the prior after the occurrence in the hut, did you still think that the confessor was alive, and in his power?' inquired Lord Hugh.

'I cannot say I did,' replied Gesta, reflectingly. 'No, my lord; the conviction was forced upon me that he knew little more of the priest's fate than I told him.'

'Strange—very strange!' exclaimed Lord Hugh. 'By the cross of Jerusalem, I cannot fathom it!

The mystery thickens rather than disperses! I would the leech were here! He must know more than you have said of the carrying away of the holy father's body from the cottage. My lord bishop, give orders that he be sent for from the castle; and you, Prince Edward, I request you to bring forward the peasant according to your promise.'

'A little patience, my Lord Hugh,' said the prince. 'I will do what I said at the proper season. Moreover I will undertake to produce Aaron the leech also—so put yourself to no trouble.'

'I cannot understand how you can effect this, but I rely on your word of grace,' said Lord Hugh, after a pause of surprise. He turned to Gesta—'Now if you have aught more to relate, go on.'

'I have little more to add that concerns the confessor,' said Gesta, 'with which you are not already acquainted. It suited the prior lately to have me condemned for the murder of the priest. I was on the point of suffering death on the gallows—the hangman blindfolded me, and a handled me, as I thought, to the place of death; but when the hand left mine I heard sounds of life, and even merriment about me; and having got one of my arms loose from the bands which confined them behind, and having torn off the bandage from my eyes, I found myself in the open street at liberty!'

'Supposing this a true account of your escape,' said the bishop, 'know you not who it was led you out of the prison?—Was it either of the gaol-keepers, Garston or Royston?'

'I am sure it was neither,' said Gesta: 'I am convinced it was some one in monkish weeds of serge, for the loose sleeve brushed my arm several times; the foot of the person also was sandalled, not iron-shod like that of a soldier.'

Gesta here caught the eye of Lady Isabella, and fancied he perceived a slight sign of caution made to him with her finger. Under this idea he suddenly checked himself and became silent; then changing

his tone to one vehement and powerful, more particularly addressing Grosteste, concluded thus :

'The prior, my lord bishop, besides having planned and accomplished the death of the confessor, also endeavoured to win me to betray the merchant's trust in me, and to plunder him of a large sum. That act of guilt, however, I could not be tempted to commit ; but being in the prior's power, I dissembled with him, as in case of the confessor. Still worse than this, my lords,' added Gesta, looking across the table in the face of the crusader, and speaking with a bold and piercing emphasis—'oh, worse than all his other acts! the abhorred, the detestable hypocrite, sought to induce me to betray the only, the beautiful, the glorious-minded daughter of Jocenus, to his then patron—the earl of Lincoln! My eyes were now quite opened. I instantly shook him off as an incarnate demon! and never since that hour have I exchanged one sentence with him. Now, however, face to face with him, I am ready to swear to all the truth of these things, and to more than these.'

Lord Hugh started up and went to the bishop ; he seemed intolerably agitated ; Gesta's gloomy eyes pursued him ; he read the workings of the crusader's soul, and, wretched and desolate as was his own condition, he would not have exchanged it for that of the knight.

There now followed some desultory conversation between the prince, the bishop, and Lord Hugh, to all which Lady Isabella listened with the deepest interest.

'It is your opinion then,' said the prince to the bishop, at conclusion of the conference, 'that the legate, and the lord-sheriff of the county, should be sent for, and that until they arrive all which we have learnt, and may yet learn further, of this matter in hand, had best be kept hidden within our own breasts.'

'That is my opinion, your grace,' said the bishop.

'Let it be so then,' said the prince,

'and if my royal father could be present when the abbot's past ways are brought to light, faith of my life! he would find a case before him no less frequent in secret than uncommon in public, for vile and ambitious churchmen crowd our land, and, like the Jews, make a pestilence in it.'

'And you will bring me to speak with those peasants and the leech?' said Lord Hugh, inquiringly.

'Immediately,' answered the prince, and then retired.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LADY ISABELLA now came to the table, and said—'Brother Grosteste and my Lord Hugh, I crave liberty to speak on behalf of the merchant and his daughter, whom the abbot has condemned.'

'Speak freely, sister,' said the bishop.

'Say all that is in your heart, lady!' exclaimed Lord Hugh.

'If I do that,' said Lady Isabella, 'I should say at once that both are guiltless.'

'A bold assertion, sister,' cried the bishop.

'I can support it,' said the lady.

'Guiltless!' exclaimed the knight repeating her word.

'Yes, my lord,' said Lady Isabella, firmly.

'Guiltless!—And have suffered the loss of all they had?' exclaimed Lord Hugh.

'All,' said Lady Isabella, with unrestrained feeling. 'Their home is in ashes—their possessions are in the abbot's coffers—the father is a desolate fugitive in one direction—the daughter in another.'

'Madam, you must be mistaken as to their innocence,' said the knight ; 'the prior assured me that they had crucified the boy.'

'And have you heard nothing to shake your confidence in the prior, my lord?'

'Truly—I have ; but until I have seen the peasants and the leech, I dare not entirely give credence to what has been said against him.'

'You may, my lord ; for I myself

pledge my word as a lady and an canoness, that all which you have heard this hour to his disparagement is *true*.'

'If it beso,' exclaimed the knight, 'double woe falls on me! Rather would I that I myself should have perished than have brought evil on the innocent! It was with great misgivings I first yielded to the belief that Jocus and Judith were capable of the foul deed. I have heard of their ruin, and expected their doom, with miserable feelings of doubt. If they have indeed suffered wrongfully, no ray of peace can ever shine upon me more!'

'The prince has undertaken to bring the peasants and the leech into your presence,' said the lady; 'they will satisfy you fully that the prior is wholly answerable for the death of your lady's confessor; but I will undertake to produce another person also who shall supply every link that is wanting in the evidence. I will also, my Lord Hugh, bring forward a monk of Icanno who will establish my assertion that the merchant and his daughter, and all their dependants, together with this young man, Gesta, are perfectly guiltless of the crucifixion. Nay, that your son was never crucified at all, but died by an accident.'

'Holy mother!' exclaimed the knight; 'how have I been imposed upon! How have I been deceived. That subtle man has indeed blinded me!'

'The bishop was nearly as much astonished as the crusader; he called on Gesta to speak out what he knew of the death of Sir Hugh, and of the boy's visits to the merchant's house.

Gesta could scarcely stand with emotion, which the Lady Isabella perceiving, she herself pointed out to him a stool, and, in accents of commiseration, invited him to sit. He did so; and then rallying himself obeyed the command of the bishop.

The feelings of Lord Hugh were excited to the utmost, when Gesta described with sincerity and warmth

the child's first introduction to Judith by her father, and her attachment to him subsequently. The knight could not doubt Gesta's narration; he felt that it exactly accorded with his former ideas of the character of Judith and Jocus. The pictures which Gesta drew of the kindness and affection that Sir Hugh had always met in the house of the merchant, he felt were real, but they were more particularly verified in his mind by the recollection of what his son himself had said to him during their first and only meeting. Hugh had spoken rapturously to him of the pretty Jewess lady and her dear father. His childish praises of the persecuted pair, and his expressions of love for them, were all tenderly recollected by the knight, who now felt them as stinging reproaches against his own hasty prejudices. Hugh had said things greatly to the prior's disadvantage, and had artlessly shown much dislike to him; this also the knight was not slow to remember, and his convictions gradually became settled on behalf of the injured Hebrews.

Lady Isabella refused to mention the names of the two individuals whom she was prepared to bring forward to substantiate the abbot's guilt.

'They had best remain unseen,' said she, 'until the investigation already agreed upon takes place before the legate and the sheriff. The abbot is crafty and dangerous: the blow must light on him publicly and suddenly, or it will only put a very brief stop to his bad career.' A slight sigh followed these words; she then exhorted the knight to rest on the faith of her assurance that his child had died by an accident, and that the nail-marks in his hands and feet had been made *after* death by the prior himself. She willingly took upon herself all the responsibility that attached itself to such an important declaration, and only requested from the knight, and her brother, the bishop, a temporary secrecy, necessary to secure the ends of justice.

Gesta's heart filled with ecstatic hope; the prospect now opening for Judith and Jocenus had assumed a sudden brightness, and in that brightness his devoted spirit completely revelled. His dim eye beamed with joy, and the despondency habitual to his countenance gave place to an animated expression, that to Lady Isabella, who knew what had caused it, made him appear particularly pleasing.

The bishop had been pondering all that had passed; he now reminded each present that the abbot had a variety of charges against Jocenus, from all which it was very unlikely the latter would obtain an acquittal. The prince, he said, was evidently strongly disposed to assist in bringing the abbot to justice, but his grace so detested the Hebrews that it was quite certain the merchant would find no personal favour from him. The Lady Isabella remarked that she was only anxious for a just result, as she knew her brother himself was. Jocenus had already lost the whole of his property, and she felt confident that when the witnesses for him had been openly heard, no one would be able to fasten upon him any crime deserving punishment.

'I hope he may be cleared of all, and that all he had may be returned to him,' said the bishop; 'but first it must be wrenched from the abbot. I will speak truly of the merchant,' he added, 'I never knew a quieter resident in Lincoln than he has been. He has minded his affairs without stirring up troubles between the Jews and Christians, and he has dealt honestly, I verily believe, with all who have traded with him, though he has oftentimes suffered bad treatment from those persons who should have known better.'

The bishop now remembered that Gesta had avowed himself the son of Myrza:—

'I set my face against witchcraft, and necromancy, and everything of that sort,' said he, 'as I do against the obstinate infidelity of the Jews; but to all people I would fain see

justice done. The woman has been charged by the abbot with having been the first cause of the death of Lord Hugh's son, by a malignant curse, and she was imprisoned this morning in consequence. Know you aught in her favour?—Speak truly, as an accountable soul.'

Gesta was startled; he had missed her from her solitary tower, in which he had been lying concealed, but had supposed that she was wandering in some of the wild places to which she often resorted for roots, and similar things that she used in her mystic profession.

'My lord bishop,' said he, 'I cannot say that my wretched mother has not pursued the study of runic mysteries. The passion for occult knowledge has always been strong in her, as it has been in many who have found favour from Christian nobles. But no professor of the secret arts, has, I am bold to say, ever manifested a better disposition than herself. She would not use the power that she possesses to work any one's harm. She is incapable of malevolence, my lord. For many years she has lived at the borders of this city, yet no one, of all her cruel and ignorant enemies, has been able to bring home to her charge one act of premeditated injury. They have abused her, prevented her from procuring food or clothing, provoked her by wicked slanders, and by personal ill-treatment, yet no public court of judgment has ever once convicted her of any act of wilful malice or revenge. If she has refrained from retaliation where it was most deservedly due, is it to be believed that she would wither the life of an innocent child who had never offended her in the least? Oh, no, no, my lord bishop, Myrza *could* not do it! but I will explain the cause of the prior's enmity. She was resorted to by him for a poisonous mixture, intended for Sir Hugh. She not only refused to give it to him, but also threatened him with open exposure if he dared to obtain any for the purpose from other hands!'

'Is it possible!' exclaimed Lord Hugh. 'If this be verity,' said he, 'I will befriend that woman as long as I live!'

'I have not heard of this before,' said Lady Isabella, 'but I do not doubt it.' She then asked Gesta if Myrza had not once supplied the prior with poison. Gesta replied it was too true that she had, and as the lady knew of the circumstance she doubtless knew also, which he did not, how that poison had been employed.

The Lady Isabella said that at the coming examination of the case before the public eye, it should be seen by all men how it had been employed.

Lord Hugh fastened his eyes on her as she spoke, while his thoughts were striving to penetrate through the whole mystery, and to arrange all the scattered links of the evidence, all the strange circumstances that had been brought to light, in one connected view. But the reflection that his boy had not perished by the horrible means on which his imagination had so much dwelt, and that Judith and Jocenus were suffering innocently, threw into the shade all other considerations. It was in vain he endeavoured to gather from what he had heard some positive conviction as to whether his deceased lady's valued confessor had really died or not: but turning suddenly to Gesta, he asked if he knew to what monastery the two monks belonged who had taken the boy from the hut.

Gesta answered that he did not; the leech, when questioned on the point by the fenmen, had said that they wore habits different from those of any of the religious orders which had been seen in Lincoln.

Lord Hugh then desired the bishop to give his opinion of the confessor's fate. Grosteste expressed himself in doubt until he should see the leech.

At this instant the prince returned into the apartment, and said that Aaron the Jew, and Philip the ferryman of the Witham, had been

in the anti-room without during Gesta's examination. A page was immediately ordered to bring them in, which was done.

The prince now explained that he had been lately at the fortress of a friend, which was situated in the lowland level of the country, and that his guide across one of the marshes had been this Philip, who still dwelt in the lone hut which Gesta had described. Philip had not felt himself so strong in health latterly as he once had been, and when he knew that it was Prince Edward whom he was conducting, he felt an uncontrollable desire to ease his mind by telling the secret that had so long lain on it. The prince listened with much curiosity and patience to his story, which exactly harmonised with Gesta's account. A repetition of the story was now drawn from Philip, but contained few points of interest new to our readers. He described the confessor as a tall man, between fifty and sixty years of age, with a ruddy countenance, and of a cheerful behaviour, and represented the friar who stabbed the priest, as a thin, dark man. He took oath to the important fact that the confessor, after being wounded, had told him several times that Gesta would have saved him, and that it was the friar who had struck him. Philip's testimony, therefore, perfectly cleared Gesta in the minds of all present from every implication in the confessor's death.

Aaron, the little medical practitioner, stood by with anxious and dubious looks while Philip was undergoing examination. Sir Gervase, the earl's grandson, had contrived to let him escape from the cell in which the earl had confined him for his robbery of the cabinets of the deceased countess. He was in the building called the Boar's Den when the prince arrived there, on the morning when Judith was attacked by the ague. Aaron had been prescribing for her, and went into the kitchen, where Philip, who was there taking a meal, recognised him. As

soon as the prince learned that Aaron was the leech of whom Philip had spoken so particularly in his mysterious story, he had a private conversation with him, which was so important, that he thought proper to bring away both Aaron and Philip to the palace at Lincoln without loss of time, in order that their mutual testimony might be given before other witnesses of rank, since it was a person of rank whom it so seriously criminated.

Aaron prevaricated a good deal, when first he spoke before the bishop, but a threat of severe usage soon brought from him a tolerable straightforward statement to this effect:—On the day when he was left alone in the hut with the confessor, after having bandaged his wound, and giving him a medicated drink which cast him into a sleep, a person in the dress of a wandering pilgrim, whom he detected to be the prior of Icanno, entered the outer room of the hut (which contained only two apartments) and craved a drink of water, which Aaron gave to him. The pretended pilgrim then talked with him about the sick confessor, and told him if he raised up the latter to dwell longer in this iniquitous world, there were some persons who would not thank him, and he would be doing any thing but a benefit to the holy man himself. Aaron understanding him very well, asked what reward those persons he had named would give him for sending the priest into such a quiet sleep as that it should never be broken. The pilgrim thereupon counted out fifty gold marks on the table, and said those persons would give as much as that, if he (Aaron) would administer to the confessor the few drops of black liquid which he put beside the money in a little phial. Aaron being, he said, in great need at the time, took up the money and the bottle, and the pilgrim (or prior) going with him into the room where the confessor lay in seeming slumber, he mixed the black liquid in the remainder of the drink that stood be-

side the pallet ready for the priest when he should awake. The prior then withdrew behind a curtain that shaded the door; the confessor awoke, and Aaron administered to him the drink, the prior observing from his hiding-place. This done, the priest sank back on his pillow overcome as it seemed by a sudden heaviness, and Aaron went into the other room with the pilgrim, who felt satisfied that the confessor had not an hour to live, and charged the leech to bury him as soon as ever he should have had expired, which the latter, for his own safety, promised to do. The prior then departed with haste. Aaron had watched for the confessor's death two hours, when, to his surprise, the sick man set up greatly recovered, and immediately began binding up his garments and putting on his hood and sandals. He had feigned sleep (for the first narcotic Aaron had given him had only partially taken effect), and had heard all which had passed between him and his disguised foe. The poisoned draught he had contrived to pour into the loosened neck of his cassock.

Fear had now a different power over him from that it had exerted in the night. He seemed to feel no more pain from his wound, no more faintness, but was animated, and had all his thoughts at his command. 'You have got your fifty marks in your hand,' said he to Aaron, 'now do not hesitate to do me a good turn *gratis*, you will lose nothing by it at present, and hereafter, when my Lord Hugh comes back, you may gain more than you think of. Help me to get forward to the nearest town from Lincoln; depend upon it—nay, I swear it—it shall not be known by any man but thyself that I am alive until Lord Hugh returns, if you keep your own counsel.' Aaron considered what the confessor had wisely said, that he had the fifty marks safely in his hand, and having been promised on oath by the priest that no one should know of his existence until the period that was now come, he not only

suffered the confessor to escape the scene of peril, but, with surprising generosity, forced upon his acceptance, also, a couple of the prior's marks, not informing the former, however, that he had stolen all the money concealed in his cloak and wallet, which had been intended for the expenses of his long journey, but leaving the good man to discover the loss at his leisure. What had become of the priest after he quitted the hut Aaron knew not; but as the succeeding night was particularly misty and dark, and the road across the level overflowed with water, the leech was rather disposed to conjecture that he had perished, and the bishop and the prince concurred in the supposition. But Lord Hugh was not to be satisfied of this until the religious houses situated between Lincoln and the sea-coast had been examined, which was done by order of Grosteste without delay. After several days of hasty but vigilant search, no trace of the confessor was to be found, excepting only the dubious evidence of a fenman living farther out on the great Lincoln level near the road who said that about the time of the holy father's disappearance, he had heard cries of distress in the night time, which had roused him from his bed, but on going abroad with lighted torches he could see no one. This man's account at last served to make Lord Hugh adopt the opinion of his friends, that the priest had been lost as he was making his way by night from the hut in which the prior had endeavoured to murder him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MEANWHILE the merchant, with the labourers who had assisted him and Gesta through the subterranean passage, had been hidden in Myrza's tower. The superstitious fears with which this building was regarded, made it a tolerably safe place of concealment for them at present; so safe, indeed, Leoni considered it, that he caused to be removed thither, by divers subtle contrivances,

those goods belonging to Jocenus, which, it will be remembered, the latter had sent to his friend's house at nearly the beginning of the panic.

When Iscara, Leoni's mother, heard of the ruin in which Jocenus and his daughter were involved, she annoyed her son greatly by her continued expression of how much she was pleased he was not connected with them in relationship as he had once wished to have been. She, 'for her part, had always foreseen some evil coming on them.' 'Pride goes before destruction,' as King Solomon says. Jocenus, she very well knew, could not always wear a turban fit for the grand sultan of the Moslems, nor such rare and fine furs, neither could his household be always so richly kept, like a palace of Persian princes. Then Judith too, good fathers! it was a fortunate thing for Leoni that she refused him, for the maiden went beyond all reason in her expenses; no Jewess ever spent so much; she might be queen of all the eastern lands; what with her statues in marble, and alabaster, and brass, and silver, nay, and gold too—and what with her new-fangled foreign paintings, and carvings, and hangings—and what with her train of servants, and her brocades, and her tissues of silver and gold, and her perfumes, and the rest of her extravagancies, it must take a substantial revenue to support her.'

It was a never-to-be-exhausted theme for scandal with Iscara; she appeared exceedingly happy while employed in expatiating at large upon it, and everything that had come upon Jocenus she had fere-seen. 'They could not keep to the good old custom of hating everything Gentile—no,' said she, 'they must have a friendship with a knight, good den! Who ever would have thought of *friendship* with a Nazarene, but Jocenus? The daughter, gramercy! must imitate her father, and take a foolish liking to the knight's child—a baptized Nazarene boy! Was ever such a thing dreamt of among true-born Israel-

ites? Verily, if Mistress Judith had been pleased to take counsel from me, I would have shown her the length and breadth of her vain, and lofty, and independent airs, carrying herself so different from all other Hebrew maidens, forsooth! and I would have shown her the end of it all, for I foresaw all that was coming, clear enough; Elias himself could hardly have foreseen it more clearly had he been dwelling again among the sacred tribes.'

But before long the house of Leoni himself became unsafe, and Iscara grew so alarmed that she packed up every moveable in the course of a few hours after dark, intending to shelter herself in St. Botolph's town (Boston). The packages and cases were all stowed in a barge near the Lincoln Bridge, and the old lady only waited for her son, who had been all the day absent from home. He returned, and great was his astonishment to find the rooms vacant, and his mother and her servants dressed ready for a journey. He looked at her quilted skirts and open kirtles, and at the double wimples drawn over her head.

'Really, mother,' said he, smiling, 'you are well garmented. Surely, you are going upon a journey round the three British kingdoms! Why, may I ask, is all this?'

'Why!' exclaimed the sour dame, 'I will tell you why!—Jocenus has brought I know not what ills on us. Woe worth the hour in which you first had a word of kindness with him!'

Leoni suffered her to exhaust her complaints against the merchant, and then he learnt from her that his house had been searched in his absence from one end to the other, it having been suspected that he had harboured some of the merchant's domestics. He reflected a little, and then said to Iscara—

'You have done prudently, mother, to send off the goods, and to prepare yourself for instant flight. I am very glad you have acted so decisively. I will not detain you here a minute longer. Go to St.

Botolph's—when once you are lodged there, I shall be easy in mind concerning you, for that town is quiet.'

But Iscara had made up her mind not to go without her son, and continuing obstinate, she at length, with scolding and persuasion, prevailed upon Leoni to yield to her wishes, as she erroneously thought, completely. He went down the river with her to St. Botolph's, and saw her received with hospitality by the Jewish people there; which done, however, nothing could persuade him to remain with her absent from Jocenus.

After an affectionate parting, he returned to within a few miles of Lincoln, and there landed. He proceeded on foot with difficulty along a stony and muddy path, until Myrza's tower appeared in the distance before him by the water-side. On his left stretched a wide fenny plain, to the foot of a ridge of high-land, which swelled higher and supported a thick forest as it advanced beyond that lonely tower to the city. On his right, beyond the river which flowed close by him, also was spread the same sort of monotonous plain, enlivened only by a very numerous flock of widgeons, which were flying from place to place over the surface of the fen. But on that side of the river, farther on, Leoni presently perceived a heronry of the earl of Lincoln, which was a sight of much interest. The herons were of all sizes, in an extensive marsh enclosed by tall pallisades down to the river's edge; many of the younger birds were flying high in the air, the presage of a storm, with their long legs hanging down, and their heads hidden between their shoulders; the older birds, some nearly four feet high, were wading in the deepest parts of the marsh in crowds, or standing motionless, either singly or in pairs, watching for fish. In and beyond the heronry, vegetation appeared scantily covering patches of solid ground that rose above the marsh, until the whole scene changed its

aspect, and thickets, and meadows, and a dense wood, clothed the rising ground from the water to the foot of the minster, whose three high and graceful towers rose in perspective above the tallest groves.

Leoni, when near Myrza's tower, drew from his vest a small silver whistle, suspended by a chain from his neck, and blew three shrill calls upon it, which were answered when he reached the private postern, in the back wall of the building, by the opening of the door. As it moved heavily inwards on its great creaking hinges, one of the merchant's labourers greeted him, and when he had entered, put into his hand a burning torch, with which he lighted himself up the difficult ascent of steps, and entered the room in which he had spent a night on a former occasion, while Gesta had been witnessing one of Myrza's incantations. There was no window in the walls of this confined apartment, but in the centre of the roof was a round hole, through which the eye might discover a sort of skylight filled with a species of horn, that had been intended to be transparent, but which had long ago lost all pretensions to the transmission of light. A heap of embers were on the hearth, but they only nourished a glimmering spark or two of fire, which did not in the least dispel the cheerlessness of the hearth.

Jocenus was sitting on a broken chair in a desponding posture, his favourite greyhound, that had escaped from his burning mansion, and had since wandered miles searching for him, now stood between his knees, licking his hands with every mark of fondness. Leoni called the merchant by name, but the latter did not move from his melancholy position; the young jeweller then observed that large tears were dropping from his eyes upon the dog's coat. Again he spoke to him, and sat down by him, gently drawing his hands from his face, an action which Jocenus did not in the least resist, although he still took no notice of his friend's presence.

Leoni felt at once affected and alarmed.

'Jocenus, have you not a word of welcome?' he exclaimed.

The merchant made no answer, only slightly pressed Leoni's hand, and shook his head mournfully. His turban was lying on the floor at his feet; his robe was dirty, torn, and spotted with blood; his beard hung down neglectedly, and desolation and woe were stamped on every feature of his face; he sighed, while Leoni sat silent, filled with profound and reverential pity; the tears still fell slowly from the merchant's eyes, and Sylvio still licked his hands. Again Leoni broke the melancholy silence:—

'My good friend,' said he, 'I hope you are glad to see me. I assure you, I have not intentionally neglected you even for one hour.'

Jocenus repeated the slight pressure of the hand which he had before given Leoni, and it was rightly understood by the latter as the expression of unabated friendship, but still Jocenus spoke not. 'I should have come to you before,' continued Leoni, 'had I not been compelled to go with my mother to St. Botolph's, where I have left her with all our substance; so you see me at present without a home, like yourself, my friend.'

The merchant turned a sudden look on Leoni:—'Are you destitute too?' cried he; they were the first words he had spoken; his voice was extremely sunken and altered, so that the heart of Leoni was chilled by the sound.

'Not exactly destitute,' replied Leoni, 'although at present without a home. You must not feel *yourself* destitute neither,' he added, in a more lively tone; 'do you see all the bales around us—they contain no inconsiderable part of your possessions, merchant; fasten your eye on them, and hope, my good friend, for prosperous days yet to come, when our now distracted and priest-led city shall have become tranquil.'

Jocenus again turned his eye upon Leoni, and the latter was struck by

the wild, nay, insane expression, of grief and despair in the dilated ball, as the merchant exclaimed with irritable and uncommon gestures—

‘The servants that have lost their lives for me—can they see prosperous days?—The good, the faithful servants, Caleb and the rest—they who shed their blood, and they whose ashes lie beneath the wreck of my house! I can tell you, young Hebrew, that I hear each one’s voice still speaking about me, that I see each one’s face still before me—and voices and faces express one cry—Faithful to the death!—faithful to the death!—We perish for you and Judith!—We rush into the embrace of the grisly king of terrors for you and Judith!—For you and Judith we run with naked breasts upon the murderous spear, and dagger, and knife!—For you and Judith we sit still in a doomed house and receive the arrow and the burning flame!—For you and Judith we plunge unprepared into a terrible eternity!’ Here Jocenus shuddered violently, and pressed his hands alternately on his eyes and his ears, muttering—‘Dreadful—dreadful! Their spirits are around me every moment! Their whispering about the grave and the life to come will not let me rest! Oh, unhappy that I am, that ever they should have died for me!—that ever they should have died for my lost daughter!’

Leoni after this remained silent, in anxious and most painful thought, observing Jocenus, who speedily relapsed into the apathetic melancholy from which he had been roused. Presently rising, Leoni took the torch, which he had rested in an iron socket by the door, and lit the lamp that hung from the roof, then raked aside the abundant ashes which were heaped on the hearth, and finding some faggots in a corner, made up a good fire, lighting it with the torch, which he afterwards extinguished.

The hound now left its master’s knees and lay down in front of the fire. While Leoni reflected for a passing instant that the mysterious

phenomenon of a fine intellect, overthrown and in ruins by a sudden calamity, was before him, and he regarded it with feelings of awe and wonder, that shut out every other thought. Jocenus seemed not to see the fire, he regarded not his friend’s movements, he said nothing more to him, but apparently wished to be left quite undisturbed. Leoni was at a loss how to act most judiciously; he wished to speak to him of Judith, of Gesta, but checked himself, fearful of exciting again the frenzy he had witnessed.

In this stange and painful silence passed nearly an hour, when the four labourers also hiding in the tower came up into the room. They had been engaged below, binding a cellar full of branches of trees and bushes into convenient bundles, that it might be brought up stairs ready for use, as the weather, in the night time especially, was now getting cold. Leoni drew one of the men aside—

‘How long,’ said he, ‘has Jocenus been in this state of mind?’

‘Ever since he knew our young lady was taken, which was the same night of our escape from the house,’ replied the labourer. ‘That was the first shock; then presently after he was told that the house, with the purveyor and others of the servants left in it, was burnt—that took a very bad effect on him; but worse than all, if worse could be, was his hearing that our young lady had been carried off from the castle by the prince; rather than that should have been, he has said, over and over again, he would have killed her with his own hand!’

‘How did he hear that Judith had been carried off by the prince?—Who could have told him such an improbable thing?’ cried Leoni.

‘It was I,’ said the labourer, ‘and it is true, master Leoni.’

‘True! and do you know whither he has carried her?’

‘Aye,’ said the man, ‘and I will tell you how I found it out. An hour or so after we had got safely lodged in this tower, I ventured out,

to see, if I could, how our people were getting on among the Nazarenes in the city, keeping myself at a little distance from it. Just a little before daybreak I reached the hill by which the horse-road runs opposite Lincoln, and there I stood looking at the house I had belonged to, which was all on a blaze on the other side of the valley. All of a sudden up come three horses and stop at the same place, within a dozen yards of me: their riders looked at the fire for some time, while the darkness and a large bush concealed me. I could plainly make out the figure of my young lady's favourite Spanish horse, and though the person who sat on it was at first wrapped up in a great cloak, I felt certain it was herself, even before she threw off the hood from her head: the other two horses I could just make out—they were large ones, such as might be used to carry war-gear, and a man sat on each, with a mantled female behind him.'

'Keturah and Belaset!' exclaimed Leoni; 'and yet—no, it could not be them, Belaset was not with her mistress when she was taken prisoner.'

'Yes she was with her at the time I speak of, master Leoni,' said the labourer; 'one of the men gave his horse a hasty jerk round, which made the female behind him cry out in a fright—I would swear that cry was no other than Belaset's.'

'And Keturah!' exclaimed Leoni; 'did you hear her voice!'

'No—but I saw her face very plainly,' said the man; 'as the horse she was upon turned away from the spot, she gave a look up the sky, and a star or two being just in that quarter, with a cloud of a light colour, they cast a dim sort of light on her features, so that I could see them; they were wet with weeping, master Leoni, and showed a fear and a melancholy that went to my heart. You know Keturah always had a high spirit and a merry temper, and you may judge how it touched me to see her look so.'

'And whither were the three conducted?' impatiently asked Leoni. The latter answered, 'he had had speech with a fenman since that morning who had told him that two Jewesses had been conveyed to the Boar's Den, in the marshes, and that a third one had been lost in the swamp; but, which of the three it was who had been drowned he could not discover, for when I put closer questions to the man he grew shy of me, and would say no more.'

'Worse and worse!' exclaimed Leoni; 'every day and almost every hour, brings forth some new calamity. This is insupportable!—one of them drowned! Moses our law-giver be witness, I never knew an hour so bitter as this! It might be Keturah herself,' he muttered, walking agitatedly across the floor; 'the maiden whose troth is plighted to me!—whose heart is mine! Did you name this also to the merchant?' he asked the labourer.

'I told my comrades here,' replied the man, 'and one of them repeated it to our master, though I begged them all to keep a close tongue upon the matter. Master would have it at first that it was mistress Judith herself who was gone—though I don't think so.'

'You think it was one of her damsels?'

'Yes, from the fenman's manner, master Leoni, I should think it was one of them.'

The countenance of Leoni changed; he fixed his eyes on the floor; again questioned the labourer; walked up and down; and then going to the merchant, touched and exclaimed—

'My dear Jocenus, hark you! You heard, did you not, these dreadful things—that either your Judith, my Keturah, or Belaset, lies drowned in the fens?'

The merchant turned his head sharply round; his lips moved at first without sound, then withering anguish sharpened his heart-broken exclamations—'She is gone! I have lost her!'

'No—no, my dear merchant, it is

not Judith who is gone, it is not your daughter who is lost. I believe that I am the only mourner in this new catastrophe. O, prophets of Israel! it is my dearest Keturah!—my forebodings tell me too plainly who has perished!’

Jocenus shook his head, put his hand within his robe to his heart, and raising his eyes upwards, again exclaimed with long-drawn groans, ‘I cannot tell!—I know I have lost my Judith, that is all! I know she is gone!—but I will not charge God foolishly. No—no—no—she was ripe for heaven. Jehovah had trained up her soul for Himself. She converses now with the angels. She is gone from her calumniated father!—she is lost to me! Ah, Jehovah! lost—for ever lost to me!’ And bursting into a paroxysm of tears, he threw himself on the floor, rending his hair and his beard.

This piteous spectacle would have brought tears into the roughest eyes. The labourers sought to raise him up, to inspire him with hope, and to console him with kindness; but Jocenus was beyond comfort; his mind had been suddenly shattered, as a noble tree by lightning, or as a stately edifice by a fierce hurricane.

It was now late in the evening, and the labourers proposed that he should be laid on the mattress, and the room darkened, for he had had no sleep since he had been in the tower. This was done; the merchant passively submitting himself to their pleasure as a weary child. His dog lay down by him, thrusting its head into his bosom. This seemed to give him a momentary pleasure, for he patted its back two or three times, and stroked it; he then closed his eyes, and remained in one position, groaned at intervals, during the night, but slept not. A little before midnight, Leoni heard him murmur, ‘*Sylvio, thou hast lost her; she was thy good friend, greyhound, but thou hast lost her;*’ and after a few seconds he breathed a more heart-rending sigh than ever, and then followed from his lips the thrice-repeated exclamation, ‘*She is gone!*’

Leoni rested his limbs on three square bales of Jocenus’ goods, leaning his head and shoulders against the wall, the rough surface of which he avoided by means of a bundle of rushes. But even he, excellent sleeper as he had always hitherto been, could not now obtain more than a very brief and feverish repose, from which he started alarmed, imagining that he heard Keturah calling on him for assistance. He opened his eyes with surprise on the dim room, only lighted a few red sticks on the hearth, and, leaning on his elbow, first looked at the merchant and his dog, and then at the labourers, who appeared very comfortably asleep on a bed made up of other bundles belonging to Jocenus, and a heap of straw. Uncertainty regarding the fate of his betrothed pressed heavily on Leoni during the remainder of that long and wearisome night, and he was truly glad when he perceived the darkened skylight assuming the dull yellow colour which belonged to it by day. Wishful to breathe the morning air, and to shake off some of the depression which hung upon his spirits if it were possible, by a view of the early sun, he kindled the torch, and found his way down to the tower-postern, there putting it into a socket placed by the door, he went out, and walked up and down on the grassy space around the building.

The breeze blew exquisitely fresh, and smelt sweetly, which was not always the case in a district so low and marshy as that he was in. He looked over the fens and along the river’s brink, no person was in sight, and he ventured to leave the postern ajar, and to walk a little onward toward the city. The sun was scarcely above the horizon, and no vessels were moving on the water. He stopped facing the heronry; the priory of Icanno was in sight; the scents of its orchard and gardens reached him; they lay jutting out into the smooth water, which embraced them like a transparent bath, and reflected their verdant sides,

and their lofty oaks and beeches. The priory was barely seen above its embosoming groves, but the sound of its early matin-bell came with peculiar sweetness to Leoni's ear, and, in spite of his Hebrew prejudices, he felt that sound elevate his soul, and an aspiration involuntarily arose from his heart to heaven, that God would deign to teach him and his friends how to bear the load of sorrow which He had seen fit to lay upon them.

He returned to the tower; the merchant still lay with the greyhound in his bosom; one of the labourers was stirring up the fire, while another was spreading on the table the materials of a breakfast, from a hamper of provisions which Leoni had conveyed to the tower. Hitherto the latter had never been troubled with a weak appetite, but now he found himself so affected by the melancholy condition of Jocenus and his daughter, and by suspense regarding Keturah, that to eat was impossible. The table was well supplied with beer, wine, and meat, but nothing tempted him, and the labourers had the board to themselves. A variety of meats were in the hamper which had been dressed under the eye of Iscara, who had not failed to complain bitterly of their destination. There was a roasted goose and two roasted pullets, pieces of boiled veal, mutton, and beef, and some delicate joints of kid, and hart; a dozen partridges on a spit, with a great and curiously-fashioned pie of ring-doves, and larks, and other small birds. A sack of cakes, leavened and unleavened, had also been provided by Leoni to store his friend's hiding-place, together with a dozen stone jars of wine and two dozen of beer. Thus neither Jocenus nor those with him were likely to be short of food for many days to come.

The merchant did not refuse a platter of venison slices and a cup of wine, which Leoni presented to him; he made an attempt to eat and drink as it were by habit, but presently shaking his head he put back

both the plate and cup, and looking in Leoni's face, with an affecting expression, said—

'I can enjoy no food out of my own house and absent from my daughter.' All at once he seized his beard, and tore it, exclaiming aloud, with groans—'Ah! my child!—my child! She is doubly—doubly lost! Her name is sullied!—her life is gone! Oh, wretched man, that I am! Oh, miserable Jew! I have lost the most angelic daughter that ever blessed a father's heart!' In such frenzied cries he opened the floodgates of his loaded spirit, and then exhausted sank back on the mattress passive and moveless as before.

In the meantime the abbot had made close search after Judith; a fortnight elapsed before he could trace her. As soon as he found she was in the Boar's Den, (a building belonging to a dissolute friend of the prince) he plotted to take her thence without the knowledge of the latter, and succeeded. She had only just begun to sit up after the dangerous ague and brain-fever which she had suffered, when she was forcibly removed in a close litter, by night, to a distant town, and thence was carried, partly by water and partly by land, to a remote and dreadful prison beyond all hope of deliverance. The prince had refrained from coming into her presence during her illness. Belaset had not told her in whose power she was, and only from the extraordinary attentions paid to her, and the splendour of the place, had she been able to gather any correct ideas of her situation. Her present removal was uncheered by the society of her devoted attendant, who was left in the Boar's Den ignorant of her mistress' absence until several hours afterwards.

The distress of the attached girl when she found that Judith was carried away, she knew not whither, or for what purpose, was excessive. Deprived of her beloved companion Keturah, by that maiden's dreadful death, her tender, fearful nature

sank under this new disaster; for many days she lay in a deplorable state of nervous illness, calling out for Keturah and her lady in such heartrending accents, that those who were about her could not refrain from weeping. At length she began to recollect that there were others left in Lincoln for whom she was bound to care, and rousing herself from her melancholy, she set out, escorted as far as the town by one of the servants of the Bear's Den; and having visited her parents, sought unceasingly for Leoni and the merchant, to acquaint them with what had happened.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE large green in the middle of Lincoln has been already named; it sloped down the hill with many a green mound, and many a pit and pond: on one side ranged the west city wall; beyond it, the Jew's quarter, then half hid in ruins: on the other, was the sheriff's mansion, a monastery, and a row of handsome stables of two stories, ornamented and embattled, the higher boundary of the green was the lower wall of the palace; and the lowest boundary of the green was a line of gloomy, blackened prisons.

These prisons defied the cheerful sunlight, and shut out every ray of heaven; one unbroken night reigned within, except when the orgies of cruelty and brutality kindled artificial beams there. The crevices in the walls, rendered nearly useless for the purposes for which they were contrived by the close interweaving of thick ironwork, and low doors, terribly loaded with defences, made the blood of the rough peasants shudder as they passed by them.

To one of these entrances came Lord Hugh, not long after the scene in the bishop's apartment, and obtained, with great difficulty and after some delay, admission within the walls. The stifling closeness of the stairs and passages along which he was conducted, and the oppressive damps which hung about them, awakened warm compassion in his

breast for the prisoners, but little hope had he that the public voice would ever be uplifted on behalf of such sufferers.

A sort of den at last disclosed itself at the bottom of a few broken slippery steps, and Lord Hugh was left alone with a squalid figure, which lay on the filthy ground, nearly in the centre of the dungeon: an old piece of tin, filled with oil, rested near the figure, and a burning wick therein revealed a deformed mouth and chin, fleshless, yellow cheeks, a forehead, from which was pushed back a heap of tangled fiery hair, and two long, yellow, bony arms; a tattered mantle was twisted around the tall wasted body, and pieces of woolly sheepskin covered her feet; in one hand the withered remains of a mistletoe bough were pertinaciously grasped, in the other a tame snake was held, while it curled about her half-bared breast seeking for warmth.

'Can this be a female!' exclaimed the shrinking crusader; the hard breathing of the witch Myrza only replied. 'Woman!—Sorceress!—by what name you would be called, arise! I come to question you on subjects of the highest moment.' Still Myrza answered not. Again he addressed her in a louder key. She turned her head on the stone pillow which supported it, and her large black eyes stared upwards at the knight, while her lips wildly muttered—

'I know who you are,' she spoke, in tones of fearful hollowness and depth; 'you are the wizard. I would do you homage, great master, if I could rise, but that is at present impossible, for I am too weak. What will be—will be.'

'I am Lord Hugh de Gant, and I come to speak with you of my lost son,' said the knight. 'If you retain any gleam of reason, arise and reply to my questions.'

'Son!' exclaimed Myrza, instantly springing up to a sitting posture, the word recalling a train of ideas in her mind. 'O, great wizard,' (she went on her knees, and used

the most abject supplications in her frenzy), 'tell me what has become of *mine*? Methought I saw him and folded him in these longing—longing—arms! then lost him again! and again saw him! and again lost him! I will dash my brains out in this hole of demons if I cannot see him again!'

'She is quite distraught,' ejaculated the knight. 'I shall learn nothing of the poison from her.'

'Poison!' cried Myrza, 'I never gave a man poison but once, and then he used it amiss. I will no more.'

'To whom did you give poison once?' asked the knight eagerly.

'Thou knowest, mighty wizard—it was to the prior of Icanno,' replied Myrza. 'And once I refused him because it was for a child—a sinless child. I could not give the deadly poison to the priest for a child. No—no; I had a child myself once!'

'This is all I wanted to hear,' said the knight. 'Unhappy creature! thou didst save my heir on the occasion thou hast named, and if it be possible I will save thee from this pestilential place.' He turned away abruptly and left her, but it was only to endeavour to effect her removal by applying to the keeper of the prison. Much difficulty here presented itself, for the abbot had given Garston strict directions to let Myrza be closely confined, and only released upon his order. Garston absolutely refused, therefore, to obey either the orders of the bishop or any other dignitary, until the abbot confirmed them by his seal, saying that the latter was now chief justice during the king's pleasure, and the functionaries of the town were only responsible to him. Disappointed, therefore, in his benevolent design, Lord Hugh returned to the palace, in order to consult further with the bishop.

Myrza was in the same posture, in the same part of her dungeon, when a second individual interrupted her dreadful solitude—it was the abbot. She started to her feet as soon as she caught the first look of

his dark voluminous robes, and his thought-burdened countenance, shaded by the fur lining of his cowl that he had thrown half way back on his head.

She met his keen look with one of piercing, nay, alarming intensity. Wildly rolling her burning eyeballs, she lifted in her hands the snake and the dried misletoe, as if warning him with all the terrors of magic not to approach nearer. Under this impression he stopped short, and in that cold, calm tone, so peculiarly his own during moments of excitement, said—

'Witch, I come to you, impelled by feelings of pity for your immortal soul—I come to warn you to prepare for your final doom; by six to-night you will die; abjure, therefore, your league with the powers of darkness while there is time for you to escape perdition.' Myrza stamped on the ground—

'Go!' she cried, in a tone of abhorrence. 'Hypocrite!—homicide! reprobate! You fill this place with foul spirits which always await on you! You have sought to kill my son body and soul! I spit at thee, foul tempter! Hence, I say!'

'Presently I will go,' said the abbot, quite composed. 'Mad as you are, you can comprehend me, I hope, when I repeat that at six you will most certainly die. You have often thwarted my views, interrupted my plans, caused me annoyance, and even apprehension, but the end of all this is come. You must now take your everlasting farewell of life and the triumphs of sorcery.'

'Mad as I am, detestable priest! I do heed thee! and believe thee! And in thy senses as thou art, do thou heed me, and believe me! I know I am now about to die, but whether *thou* wilt deprive me of this painful breath, or no, the spirits that govern death have not shown me yet. But hark thou to what they *have* whispered in my ear concerning *thyself*, and tremble, and despair! There was a tree planted by a fairy at thy birth; it has grown

to maturity ; it has suddenly flourished to the surprise of all that watched it ; it has become a lofty and a spreading tree ; birds lodge in its branches ; flocks browse beneath its shade ; but the dew which has fed it has been unwholesome, and the heat which has nourished it has been baleful ; and the lofty tree must as suddenly wither as it suddenly flourished ; and when the stars of last January come back to their places in the heavens, and when the birds of next spring return from the lands whither they are now fled, then will the tree, root and branch, be sapless, scorched, and withered ; and never--never--may it rise again.'

The abbot was inwardly impressed by this prophecy, and he paused to shake off the tremor it occasioned before making some contemptuous observation. He was then about to quit her, when Myrza exclaimed, shrilly—

'Stay, thou man of blackness and of blood ! Thou hast more to learn of thy coming fate. Thou hast sought to entrap bodies and souls to ruin, and now—thine *own*—thine *own* are forfeit ! *Thy* time is come ! *Thy* ruin is near ! *Thy* destruction approaches ! Where is the money thou hast robbed ? Where is the blood thou hast shed ? Remember those whom thou hast corrupted ! Remember the poison thou hast used ! Remember the bribery thou hast acted ! Remember the false witness thou hast borne ! Remember the sufferings thou hast caused ! All those things will soon press *thy* soul down—down to the very edge of the bottomless pit ! Hear thou my words ! they are sooth—they are true !—as true as that I now speak and you hear ! I dare not say,' she added, after a pause, in milder tones, 'that thou hast *no* hope before thee, for at times there steals into my own soul glimpses of a light which seems to come from a clime of mercy and love ; it may be, priest, pardon may be there for thee, foul as thou art !'

'Cease this ridiculous tirade,' said

the abbot, his lip scornfully curling while in his breast he defied all the fears of religion. 'Expect your doom at the end of four hours.'

After he had left her, she hastily twisted the snake about her head, where it nestled among her matted hair, and then pointing the dried branch to the four corners of the dungeon, bowed herself thrice to each, repeating her wild avocations. Breaking off, she sat down on the floor, and, drawing up her knees to her chin, and stretching out her arm, traced with her forefinger a circle round her in the air. She then seemed absorbed in recollections of former mysterious scenes, which had impressed themselves on her fancy ; and such unconnected rhymes as these escaped her lips :
I sat at the mighty wizard's feet,
In the terrible cavern's deep retreat ;
A dragon right and a dragon left,
And a knife in his heart up to the hilt ;
For the WITCH OF DEATH had vanquished him—

Mark—mark ! how the lamp burns
blue and dim !
A wolf behind, and a wolf before—
The wizard sat on the reptiled floor ;
His ponderous limbs on the charmed
ground
With serpent-coils were tightly bound.
Each minute a tempest-wind swept
through,
But my lamp burnt steadily red and blue.
Then HELA gave me that potent snake,
The wizard had brought from a haunted
brake ;
Fiercely it hissed—its red eyes flamed,
As the wizard's spells to me were nam-
ed—
Hark—hark ! oh, hark to the wizard's
moan !
His spirit comes with cry and groan !
DEATH's herald, hail ! advance ! ad-
vance !

I see your train in mystic dance.
Wreathing round and round my cell—
I hear your summons—it is well.
I will HELA's hest obey—
Your errand done—away—away !

She was interrupted in her operations by a third opening of the iron door at the top of the steps, and lifting her sunken but blazing eyes impatiently they rested on her son. A sudden cry broke from her, and the witch was lost in the mother. The clouds which obscured her reason were pierced by a sudden beam of light ; she embraced him with a mother's love. Gesta passed his hand across his eyes, and in a

broken but passionate voice exclaimed—

'Mother, what a place is this for you to be in! The abbot shall rue this malignant behaviour to you!'

'Did you deign to call me mother?' cried Myrza, sobbing and smiling, and looking up in his face with bewildered adoration. 'What a blessed sound! Thou callest me *mother*!—Callest the ill-used, hated, despised Myrza, mother!'

'Calm yourself,' said Gesta, speaking to her with tender pity; 'sit down on this step beside me; I have something to say to you that will be pleasing.'

She sat down as he said, and Gesta, overcoming the repugnance which still haunted him, suffered her to throw her arms around his neck, and to print a hundred kisses on his face and hands.

'Mother,' said he, 'endeavour to listen calmly to me. The good bishop is exerting himself for your deliverance, as well as Lord Hugh, the crusader: but you cannot possibly be released until to-morrow, on account of certain obstacles which it will do you no good to mention. I have therefore obtained leave to remain with you, as I cannot bear to think of your being here alone.'

Myrza heard nothing that he said, excepting that he was to remain with her. Her eye gleamed more intensely than ever—joy overcame her decaying powers—she slipped from his breast and fell down senseless. He raised her with solicitude: whatever she was in the estimation of others, he could not but see a mother in her, and her strong love for him had powerfully roused his feelings.

She opened her eyes, and saw him bending anxiously over her. Joy again lighted her desolate heart, and she became comparatively rational and composed, at the same time she spoke with impressive sadness—

'My son, blessed are my eyes that look on thee!' she exclaimed; 'blessed are my ears that hear thy voice! Twenty-six years I have

languished for thee, and now, and now the blessed hour is come of our meeting!'

'We have met before, mother,' said Gesta.

'So we have—I had forgotten,' said she, smiling with an ecstasy that made her frame tremble; 'but I have lost sight of thee since then. And now of thy own wish thou dost come to cheer my dungeon, and to see me die. How grateful I am I cannot tell thee, for my heart chokes with its delight!'

Again she sat on the step beside Gesta; again she embraced his neck, slipping the tamesnake, unobserved, from her head into her bosom.

'And now tell me,' said he, 'what you meant by saying I came to see you die?'

Myrza's eye grew deep and solemn; its expressions thrilled Gesta; she pressed his hand hastily, and said, with emphasis—

'I said that which is true! The priest has been here; he has spoken my doom at six—at six, my son—you understand me—and I hope no mercy from him.'

Gesta started, and exclaimed—'He cannot be so merciless! He dare not do it!'

'Little are his threats to me,' said Myrza, mildly; 'I have a surer warning here,' laying her hand on her breast. 'My life has long been a dying lamp; at one time it has burnt brightly, at another dimly; sometimes it has appeared high and lively, and sometimes just going out; but now it has shot up its last blaze, and in a few hours darkness will swallow it up.'

Gesta looked on her with awe, and there was something in her voice and countenance which forbade him to think she spoke erroneously. Death was evidently stealing over her, and her mental powers, as she had expressed it, were shooting up now into their last blaze.

'I have been lying in a trance,' said she; 'I have seen a thousand shapes which no human eye but mine might see; I have heard a thousand voices which no human ear but mine

might hear; and at times the hopes of my girlhood, hopes cruelly destroyed! have come over me like the sweet tones of distant music which the open air brings.' She pressed her hands on her face, and Gesta listened with curiosity, surprised by the occasional elevation and picturesqueness of her language. 'Yes,' she continued, 'this day I saw again my little home in which I was born; there was the garden—the sweet-pea, the honeysuckles, the roses, the flowers dedicated to our lady, the flowers named after incidents in the Saviour's life, the passion-flower, and others. I saw my good and tender father and mother spreading the earl of Lincoln's bird-nets on the mere; I ran to open the garden gate for them; I kissed them; I showed them their clean and sparkling hearth, their frugal board spread for supper; I knelt with them before lying down on my pallet, and heard my father pray for me.' She stopped, and wiped the streaming tears from her eyes.

'If you were ever thus happy, mother, what could have so transformed you!' exclaimed Gesta, astonished and affected.

'What!' she echoed sharply, her face becoming fierce and wild; 'it was a devil in human shape made me what you see me!'

'And he,' breathlessly exclaimed Gesta, 'was——'

'Your father!' said she suddenly.

There was a momentary silence. Myrza resumed—'I was a plain-featured girl, but sprightly and well shaped, and, as every one told me, clever. Our feudal lord had been hunting; he came to rest in our cottage; I was alone; I spread for him a meal, and he chatted with me while he ate; he flattered me and I was vain enough to be pleased; he gave me a gold mark; and when he left me, I dreamed of him, and thought of nothing but his honey words, and his gallant figure. I was wooed by one of my own condition, and if my head had not been turned by our lord's flatteries, I should have been a good and a happy wife

to him. The day was fixed for our marriage; my parent's hearts were set upon the match, when I again saw the baron, and took other presents from him, while his sweet but poisonous flatteries were again poured into mine ear; we met again and again; and then the day came on which I was to be married—on that day I was missing.

'A little time passed, my son, and I was a homeless wretch! unpitied, friendless, I went to my deserted home; my father and mother were dead; the cottage was falling to ruin, I fled from the taunts of those who knew me, and hid myself in the woods. There *thou* didst hang on my breast, sometimes solacing me, sometimes adding to my pain by thy cries; our dwelling was a hole in a rock, and our food wild nuts, and the bread which I received as alms at the door of a monastery. But my brain became bewildered, and God only knows how *thou* didst fare the while.

'When I came to myself all the world seemed altered. I had received a gift by which I saw beings invisible to common eyes. I was surrounded by spirits good and bad. I found that I had great power. I had often meditated on fate before my misfortune, now I found that I could command it. At that period the 'fair of Lincoln' took place. I heard the roar of the battle from my solitude on the opposite hill; the cry of the sacking could scarcely go up to heaven for fire and smoke; the bloodhounds of war cried havock! havock! and the earl of Lincoln rode up and down the streets among them. I heard his own voice, which had once sounded such fatal music in my ear, and fled back into the solitary place where *thou*, his child, lay sleeping on leaves.'

Gesta's heart beat thick. 'I—I the son of the earl of Lincoln!' he faltered; 'this is amazing, if it be really true!'

'Behold!' exclaimed Myrza, hurriedly disengaging from her neck a very thin and tarnished silver chain;

'this was the baron's last gift to me; take it—and when you have an opportunity, open this round piece of gold fastened to it, and show him *this*,' so saying, she disclosed to Gesta the painted likeness of a girl of sixteen or eighteen. He walked to the light, and, stooping, looked closely at the features; the peculiarly plain mouth and chin enabled him at once to recognise Myrza's face in it; but, notwithstanding these drawbacks, the countenance was very pleasing; the hair was there smoothly knotted up under a silk net; the eyes were remarkably well shaped, full of fire; the cheeks dimpled and smiling; and the happy, innocent expression of the lips, diverted the eye from the defective shape of the lower part of the face.

'Do you think that picture flattered me?' said Myrza; 'I know it was a strict resemblance. He stood by while it was taken, and was angry with the painter, an Italian, for not having made it show me to more advantage.'

Gesta compared it with the neglected and ghastly countenance before him, and shuddering, cried—'What must you have endured before you could have become thus altered!'

'Lend me the case,' said Myrza. He handed it to her; she turned it, 'and here,' said she, 'you may see the face which was once brighter than the sun to your mother's heart.' With feelings of indignation and curiosity, mixed with other impulses, he pondered the likeness of the earl of Lincoln, there represented as a reckless looking knight of about thirty years of age.

'I see here,' said Gesta, 'the traces of his present character. Would that my father had been the poorest honest man on the surface of the earth, rather than this earl! He would have given her back the chain and case, but she refused them.'

'No, my son, they are yours. I shall not disgrace you in the world for I am near my end; and when I am in the earth, you may hide

from every one but yourself the knowledge of your relationship to me. But your father—you will see him—you will show him these tokens which he gave me, and claim from him a provision.'

'Never!' said Gesta; 'I will never receive any thing from him as long as I live.'

'There spoke my own son!' said Myrza, with an admiring smile. 'Nor would I! I have famished for want of food, and clothes, but never, never would I solicit any relief from him!—never would I have accepted any! He thinks that both I and you died in the destitution to which he abandoned us; and in the bitter cold of that time we must have died, had I not found a refuge in that tower which has ever since been my shelter. There I was instructed by a wizard; he died, leaving me his books and other relics. I studied deeply until I was wasted and disordered with continual watching, and steeped in magic from head to foot. I missed thee—I never saw thee afterwards for twenty-six years. After my loss I wandered about Lincoln, regardless of everything but my hope of finding thee. I was famishing with hunger, when I roamed the outskirts of the city walls. There lay the wreck of the battle:—knights, squires, casques, crosses, shields, spears, bows, darts, gay banners of taffeta, silk, and velvet of all colours, were bedabbled and plastered with the best heart's gore of those who had a little before borne them so proudly. That mysterious night I roved famishing among the dead, until I felt deserted by the last remnant of patience left me, and stood up on a heap of the slain, and in the face of the moon and stars which looked pitifully on me, tried to curse the race of man! but I was consumed by a frightful thirst, and could only make an idle chattering with my dry mouth that was not louder than an infant's death-sob. Again I tried to curse, standing among the gory corpses; but my jaws and my tongue were mute, hard and baked together with

rabid thirst. I looked round, and saw a strange being who bade me stoop and drink. I stooped, and when I rose my cracked lips were soothed with a cool, thick moisture, and my throat received the same as pleasant dew; my burning temples also were refreshed by it as I pressed my wetted palms on them; then wide and far resounded my curses on mankind! My voice sounded horribly to my own ears, and a cloud rolling off the moon, I saw that I had drank blood. O, mercy! what an awful moment was that! I gazed all around with staring eyeballs; the dead appeared everywhere resuscitated; black gigantic forms stalked to and fro; the hungry wolf-dog howled at me as it rent the corpses, and the foul carrion-bird beat his great wings about my ears. I shrieked and ran as if for my life, and next day I found myself in my tower, huddled in a corner. Since then I have suffered agony upon agony; my nights have been sleepless, unrefreshing to body or mind; my days have been burdensome and full of pain; light has been hateful to me, and darkness fearful; intercourse with spirits has sapped the springs of my life, dried up my blood with fever; grief for thy loss has wasted me; and the remembrance of your father's ill-usage has turned my woman feelings to blackest gall!

Her last sentence had been uttered with gasping breath, and with returning frenzy: and now she stiffened, as Gesta supported her, and a sharp conflict between life and death took place within her convulsed frame. Again, however, she revived, and seemed anxious to say more, but the rattling in her throat prevented her words. At this solemn instant, the door above again grated on its hinges, and a heavy foot came within it to the head of the steps; Gesta looked up and his pulses throbbed violently when he saw the bulky figure of the earl of Lincoln.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'By St. George, and St. Denis!'

cried the earl, making his way down the steps with sounding tread helped on by the sheathed sword on which his overgrown figure leaned: 'this place was contrived on purpose for witches. This beats all my own dungeons to nothing! The worst in all my castle is nothing to compare with this! Not a seat here of any sort, ha!' he looked on all sides of the dungeon, 'then I must e'en rest me here,' and knocking off some rubbish from a step with his scabbard-point he sat down panting with the exertions he had made. 'I heard from the abbot,' said he, taking his steel cap from his head, 'that thou Myrza, our city witch, wert to be hung and burnt this evening, and I have come off in a hurry to ask you a question that concerns me nearly, if you please me with your answer, I will have masses said for your soul in my private chapel every night for half a year.'

With a violent effort Myrza recovered herself; the ruling passion of her mind at once arose again paramount over reason, and she asked, in a lofty manner—

'What is the question?'

'I have a grandson who is lame and sick: can any one in the world do him good? Are there any mixtures to be had for love or money which will cure him! Will he ever get over this bout?—and how?—this is what I want to know, and, to reward you masses—'

'Let them be said for the salvation of your own soul, and for the apostate priest you have helped up to power,' interrupted Myrza, 'I ask them not. Your grandson will die; and before the clouds which are now in the heaven have all melted before the sun, you will be lying with him, under a pompous canopy of stone, and within four narrow and dark walls.'

'Foul hag!' exclaimed the earl drawing his sword from the scabbard, and rising with a threatening look. Gesta, who had withdrawn from Myrza on seeing the earl, now sprang before the naked weapon.

'Baron, touch her not!' he exclaimed, in a deeply agitated, but imperative voice. The earl eyed him from head to foot, then in a tone of mingled ferocity and contempt, said—

'What dog art thou, that darest to check the baron of Lincoln!'

'It is no matter who I am,' said Gesta; 'but I say you shall not harm this woman while I stand by.' The earl, without deigning another word, raised his brawny arm, and Gesta fell half-stunned to the ground.

'Take that for thy pains!' cried the former, coarsely laughing.

But Gesta quickly recovered his feet, and, powerfully grasping the arm which had struck him, panted forth with reeling brain—

'Baron, had there not now been a voice within me which thou canst not understand, thou shouldst not live to quit this dungeon! Had I not just learnt that the same blood which runs in this arm which has disgraced me, runs in my own, you should pay the extreme penalty of this injury defenceless as I appear.'

'What means the fool!' exclaimed the earl, surprised by the allusions made, and looking in Gesta's face which reflected the most impetuous emotions.

Here Myrza threw herself between them, and ejaculated, looking piercingly on the earl—

'William of Lincoln, hearken to me! Remember Margaret, your falconer's daughter, who was left by you to shame and despair. It is her son you have dared to strike. Think not, if my life were not now expiring, but I could make thee repent that blow.'

'Thou! and who art thou?' exclaimed the earl, looking first at the mother, then at the son.

'Margaret!' answered Myrza, emphatically.

'Tis a lie!' ejaculated the earl.

'Thou, Margaret. Why she was a laughing girl, with the complexion of a red and white apple—a neat and sprightly girl as ever danced under the trees at a holiday. Thou!

—thou!—Out on thy juggling, foul harri-dan!'

'Even such a girl was I at sixteen when Lord William came in my father's cottage to rest after hunting. You mind that visit,' said Myrza, pointedly; 'but I was sadly altered, was I not, ere you shut the door on me, when my crying baby hung on my breast? Do you doubt still?—then here is the picture you paid for, and the chain you fastened it with upon my neck.' She took from Gesta the article of which she spoke, and, holding it before the earl, pointed to the blooming female face on the ivory, with a glance of withering reproach.

The earl examined it; 'Body-o'me! it is the same!' he exclaimed. 'But this is no more your face than mine is Beelzebub's? Besides, what do you mean by all this mummery? she and her child died in the frost—I had forgotten that at first.'

'When you were in a fit of rage, did you not strike Margaret's arm with your drawn sword, and cut it to the bone?' said Myrza. 'See here the scar!' and, throwing back her mantle from the upper part of her arm, she pointed her finger to a mark between the elbow and her shoulder.

'I cannot deny that witness,' said the earl, a little embarrassed.

'Nor this?' said Myrza, drawing his attention to the deformed shoulder of Gesta. 'When his limbs were feeble in earliest infancy, did you not, by coarse usage, mar them? and was not his shoulder disjoined by your violence? Shame on your inhuman temper, Lord William!—it was to you he owed his deformity!'

Gesta felt half suffocated with the knowledge that his father had caused his disfigured personal appearance, which had been always the misery—the canker of his life; nor was he less revolted by the brutal treatment which it was too plain his mother had received from her deceiver. Wretched a being as she was, he yet felt the sympathies of nature stir within him infinitely

more in her favour than in his ; for in her he saw a victim ; an injured sufferer ; a woman who had been grievously sinned against ; who had been rendered insane, first by savage treatment and afterwards by bitter sorrow ; a woman not depraved, but who had drunk misery's cup to the dregs through another's depravity ; a woman whose warm feelings had been smothered—never destroyed ; and whose vigorous intellect, which nothing but death could wholly quench, still survived, although benighted and astray, groping among sepulchres, and phantasms, the creations of a crazed imagination. In the earl, on the contrary, he beheld that worst of characters, a deliberate betrayer ; a man totally unprincipled, unbridled in his passions, savage in his temper, cruel, revengeful, without honour or generosity, possessing only the worst traits of chivalry without any of its redeeming ones.

Of the earl's possessions he disdained to think a moment, he craved not a shekel weight of them. Once he had wished for money—had nearly sold his soul for it—then, had he known that the earl was his parent, it would have gone hard, but he would have obtained something from him. But now the stimulus was gone ; it had been for Judith, and for her only, that he had desired gain : now she was beyond his reach, beyond his hopes ; to purchase her release he knew was impossible ; and even were she free and disposed to favour him, and he could forget his deformity, yet he assured himself she could never be his, since her heart was in Lord Hugh's keeping, and he was convinced that Lord Hugh loved her.

All this passed with the rapidity of lightning across his mind, while Myrza spoke to the earl. The latter muttered an oath of surprise and mortification at the discovery which had been made ; and then in a changed key, hastily getting rid of his embarrassment, re-inquired if Gervase would recover.

'I have told you,' was Myrza's brief response.

The earl lingered at the bottom of the steps, feeling that something was required of him, but unwilling to stir so much as a finger for the good of either Myrza or his son.

'Well, sith your name be Margaret, though by St. Denis, I can see little of my old acquaintance in your looks !' said he to the witch, 'I will overlook those spiteful croakings of yours against Gervase and me, and pay for masses for your soul, as I said, and for a parting boon to thee. Our Lady's benison be with thee ! my henchmen wait for me without. Young man, farewell ! you have lived among the Jews, and have helped them in their cursed practices, take heed lest thou art a sharer in their punishment !'

'I tell you, Lord William,' said Myrza, 'that before you enter your castle gates again there will be an arrow in your heart, which no surgeon, whether he be a Jew or a Christian man, will be able to pluck away !'

'My coat of mail is tough,' said the earl, striking his breastplate with his heavy hand ; 'Montjoye St. Denis ! it must be a sharp arrow which can enter through these flat steel rings.'

'The arrow which I speak of will enter in spite of armour,' said Myrza.

The earl burst into a loud laugh, which was forced : 'We shall see—we shall see,' said he. 'I defy the devil ! A little time ago, I bought absolution from all my bygone misdemeanors from the legate ; and indulgences for future ones I obtain from the abbot, so I can have nothing to fear you see for my soul ; the church is bound to make that safe—I have paid dear enough for it ;' with another forced laugh he went up a step.

'Earl,' said Gesta, who had been standing silently reflecting, 'you will not, I hope, leave my mother to die by the abbot's executioner ? six she tells me is the hour. You can prevent this. Your word is fate in Lincoln. The abbot will not dare to

gainsay your will in your own chancellery. I claim your interference on her behalf, since she has been so injured by you: and if you will preserve her, and allow me to have safe conduct for her out of the city, I will promise you that neither she nor I will trouble you for more favours.'

'I will see what the abbot says,' said the earl; 'I will do what I can if there be time.'

'If there be time!' repeated the indignant Gesta. 'Can you put an *if* to such a resolve? Is my miserable mother's portion to the last moment of her life to be gall and wormwood? There must be no *if*, earl! She must be saved by you at once and entirely, or I shall hereafter think of my father with unmitigated abhorrence.'

'Say nothing more—plead not for me, my son,' said Myrza; 'one word at parting I must speak to him. Lord William, hark you; if you would sleep quiet in your grave, provide for this son who stands beside me—remember my words.'

The earl paused at the door at the top of the steps, and waved his hand to Gesta and the witch, taking no notice whatever of the last speech Myrza uttered, but repeating to her his previous dubious promise—'I will do what I can with the abbot for you;' and so saying he left the dungeon.

Myrza sank down in a fit on the floor as soon as the door closed; her cough was now reduced to an occasional convulsion, her breathing, however, grew worse and worse every moment; the anguish she endured was distressing to Gesta, who partially supported her labouring frame with difficulty; the throes of pain which wrung her breast and side, would not allow her to remain at rest an instant, still, amid her sufferings, a mother's love was paramount.

'You are mine,' she gasped at intervals, grasping his hand, and kissing it with passionate fondness. 'I rest on your neck, and my heart is at ease though my body suffers.

You are with me my own son! Go not away from me until I am out of pain. Stay with me—oh, stay!—until the struggle be over.'

'I will—I will,' said Gesta. 'If there were but any means of relieving you—' he cried, looking about.

'There are none—I wish none, I wish to die—to die *thus*,' said Myrza, again embracing him with much effort. Her senses now once more wandered. 'My son shall possess my secrets, those which the wizard and Hela bestowed on me,' she muttered: 'he shall be mighty, and he shall remember that his ill-used mother had balanced the world's destinies in her hand. She could have dreadfully punished all who despised and hated her. She could have laid Lincoln in ashes; she could have brought plagues on England; but she held back her command, and the spirits of pain and death were controlled. All this he will understand, and he will admire her memory, and love it, and the people of ages to come shall hear of me and my fate through him.'

What leaning Gesta was conscious of towards her supposed occult powers was certainly much corrected by these extravagant words; but, though he now saw clearly that she had been self-deceived by a diseased imagination, yet he could not persuade himself that *all* her art was delusion. He had seen the partial fulfilment of her prediction regarding Judith; the latter, since Myrza spoke it, had been torn from her luxurious home, from peace, from security, from the ties of affection, and was now confined in some solitary prison, most likely such an one as Myrza had described, without hope at least of present release. He shuddered with a deathlike sickness as he thought of the probable length of her imprisonment, alluded to in the prophesy:—

These about her will be, by night and by day,

While her heart's-hope pines, and wastes away,
And her blood grows thin, and her bones decay.'

And had not Myrza said—

'No Jew shall ever win the maiden heart;'

and since then had not *Leoni's* suit been refused? Again, had she not said—

'Who seeks her love, shall seek her love in vain:
His sole reward—*danger*, and *grief*, and *pain*.'

And was not this up to the present time strictly applicable to himself, who was suffering both 'danger, grief, and pain,' for hersake and her father's? And was there the least probability that he should ever have any happier reward? Then had he not seen his mother's invocation of spirits, and had he not been convinced at the time that an extraordinary shape was present amid the darkness that surrounded her enchanted circle? But while he remembered this, a shade of unbelief jumped his mind, and he found that he could not be positive that his fancy had not imposed on him. After all, the self-confidence in her mysterious art which Myrza exhibited, and the elevated language and gestures with which she accompanied its exercise, more than any facts which might be adduced, impressed him, and communicated a contagion to his also sickly fancy, that no doubts could medicine. Myrza felt the more joy in his presence, understanding that, instead of being disposed to hold her pretensions in contempt, he rather treasured up in his mind all she said.

'Mother,' whispered Gesta, who looked upon her wanderings as perhaps mixed with a portion of inspirations, 'you have foretold evil to day to those who hate you, can you not foretell good for me who pity you, and regard you?'

Myrza was comparatively calm now; exhaustion had followed agony, her eyelids were heavy with death, her breathing, though quick, was barely perceptible. Gesta regretted his selfish feelings of anxiety for Judith and the merchant which had prompted him to disturb her.

'You shall not answer me,' said he. 'I was unfeeling to speak to you of any worldly thing in your present condition; rest as well as you can, and forget what I asked.'

'Tell your mother if you do not love the Jewess of the strait?' panted Myrza, her voice being scarcely audible even to the attentive ear of her son.

A shock vibrated in his heart; his pale face slightly reddened; he pressed the damp hand which held his own, and replied in a smothered tone—

'Yes, mother, if ever man loved, I love her! But she is an angel!—I a wretch! I hope nothing for myself now, but I would fain see her happy, and her father prosperous, as they have been, and as they deserve to be.'

'She will be happy,' said Myrza, but her manner of pronouncing these words made them of doubtful import to Gesta's eager ear; 'her father will prosper, thou wilt be high.' Here a gurgling in her throat again took place, and Myrza pointed to a corner of the dungeon where was profound darkness—'See!—see!' she exclaimed, in a hollow murmur, 'my father and my mother!' Gesta felt his hair stiffen, and his blood curdle with sudden fear. 'They pray for me!' she cried; 'I shall be at peace!'

She lay immovable for some dreary minutes after this.

'Mother!' said Gesta, in alarm, fearing she was dead. She started.

'The manuscripts of the wizard,' said she, 'are buried in the middle of the great room in my tower, and I have added others of my own to them; they are yours; make a good use of them, and be great, and lay my body on the spot where you will find them.'

She expired with a terrible gasp as the last word passed her lips, and at the same instant the abbot, an executioner, with a rope over his arm, and Garston, opened the door at the head of the steps and came down into the dungeon, the gaol-keeper's page preceding them with two blazing torches, and two assistant-executioners following in the rear with detached pieces of a moveable gallows.

The two posts of the machine

were placed erect on the dungeon floor, self-balanced by projecting pieces of wood at the bottom, and a strong cross-beam was fitted into their tops; the executioner speedily knotted his halter in the middle of the beam, trying its strength by swinging his body on it while he held by the noose with his hands.

The rope cracked and gave way, which occasioned some side-jests and laughter against 'squire Ketch,' between the satellites of the ruler of the gallows, who was also porter of the city, but he checked them with a threat or two, glancing at the grave person of the abbot.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE cheek of Gesta was a deep red as the abbot surveyed him, he had softly laid the body of his mother straight on the floor and had drawn over her face the corner of her old mantle; he now stood before it with the honourable purpose of defending it from mutilation at any personal risk.

'Hah!' exclaimed the abbot, 'thou here! Methinks the Lord de Gant shows little respect for his lady's confessor in conniving with the bishop to let thee remain at large! Thou hast escaped me once doubtless it was by some arch trick of thy demon-leagued mother—let that rest at present. Stand from the witch!'

'The unfortunate creature is already dead,' said Gesta, and he lifted the mantle from the face of the corpse, while the torches flashed on it, and the men with the abbot pressed near, surprised, and fearful. The features wore a stern expression, that seemed to speak her wrongs even in death, and to threaten retribution.

'Take up the body and fulfil the law on it,' said the abbot, breaking the silence of the spell-bound group.

'It shall not be touched,' said Gesta. 'I have sworn to myself to bury it decently, according to her wish, and you shall lay no rude hands on it!'

'I have commanded you,' said the abbot to Garston, 'see my orders are obeyed.'

'Come, step on one side,' said Garston to Gesta.

'You shall not touch the body!' repeated Gesta, planting himself firmly in front of it, and exhibiting a broad and long knife, sharpened at both edges, which he had worn concealed. The defence was useless; Garston sprang on him, and with the grasp of the giant pulled him down; the executioner and his men then bound him, wresting the knife from his grasp, and the lifeless body of Myrza was suspended from the cross beams of the gallows.

The abbot now whispered to Garston and then went up the steps.

Gesta felt a chill of alarm at that whisper, meeting the cold hard glance of the speaker, and as the latter turned away he observed, with painful incertitude, the motions of the men. The body of Myrza was permitted to hang no more than a few minutes, the rope was cut, and she fell heavily on the ground.

'What are you going to do?' exclaimed Gesta, as the executioner who had received a private signal from Garston, approached him, dangling before his shrinking vision a second rope.

'To tie you up to yon crossbeam, that you may keep your mother company to-night,' said Garston, with a chuckle.

'I will not submit to death! You dare not do it! The bishop will make you answer with your lives for mine!' cried Gesta, and mortal dread crept through all his sweating frame. 'Unbind me! Let me loose! The prince will call you to account for this!'

'You have mighty friends, youngster,' said Garston, grimly smiling; 'tis a great pity they are outside the prison walls just now. You may as well take the matter easy, and make no noise about it, for d'ye see you must swing, whether you like it or no.'

Gesta made a powerful struggle to burst his bonds, but every effort only served to excite the coarse ridicule of the men, who suffered him to exhaust himself, and then deliberately threw the noose over his head, tightened it, and dragged him along the ground to the fatal machine.

The abbot stood on the steps, leaning against the wall with folded arms, contemplating what was going forward with a countenance partly revengeful, partly abstracted. He seemed to hear none of Gesta's wild appeals, remonstrances, or threats, but to be solely wrapped in his own secret speculations, and in the enjoyment of revenge. He pressed his hands on his ears, however, as the last desperate cry of his victim rang through the vaulted roof and dark recesses of the dungeon, and glancing only once at the writhing figure pendant from the beam, moved up to the top of the steps. There he started back, for the sound of armed feet was without; Royston threw open the iron door and the crusader entered, intending to have Myrza removed to a better cell, to effect which he was prepared with the handwriting of the prince and the bishop.

The first glance of the knight into the wide and gloomy space below showed him the portable gallows far back from the steps, and a shape which he instantaneously recognised suspended from it.

'What! more murder, abbot?' was his emphatic and meaning exclamation; and the next instant he rushed down, and severed with his hunting-knife the deadly cord round Gesta's neck. A single moment served to free the latter from the strangling pressure of the noose and from the bands which fettered his limbs; there were a million sparks of fire playing about his sight; his ears were full of hollow sounds as of roaring sea-surges; his features and neck were blackened; his breath, stopped in its progress through the tightened throat, struggled for room, and caused him awful sensa-

tions; his heart was ready to stop its momentary operations; already the life-current there began to congeal; but, by a mighty struggle, nature shook all these off, and he regained his half-dissolved senses, and breathed a blessing on his deliverer.

But the knight and Gesta were both in the lion's mouth now. Well did the abbot foresee his utter ruin if they left the dungeon alive. At once he understood that the knight was to some extent enlightened upon the subjects on which it was singularly important that he should be kept in the dark.

'If they live, I am lost!' said he to himself; 'self-preservation is the law of nature—they must both die!' Having thus resolved he again whispered with Garston, but the latter was obstinate in a non-compliance with his wishes.

'He dared not lay hands on a Christian knight,' he said, doggedly, 'unless he had been judged by his peers. Anything else the abbot required he was ready to do.'

'Fool!' muttered the abbot, as his mental eye rapidly scanned all the perils that were before him if the knight were not now immolated.

Lord Hugh asked Gesta a brief question or two, the replies to which put him in possession of all that had occurred here.

'I cannot say,' said Lord Hugh, 'that the abbot has not lawfully condemned this woman's body to the flames inasmuch as she practised forbidden arts; but this I say the sentence argues not that humane and merciful disposition which a son of holy church should have, for she was not chargeable with injury to the body or estate of any one; and as to the curse it is said she laid on my poor child, the abbot knows *that* accusation false.'

'I know it false?' repeated the abbot, his heart fluttering, but his voice indignant. The knight echoed the words, and was about to say more than prudence would warrant, when he recollected his promise of secrecy to Lady Isabella, and checked himself.

'Hereafter, abbot, I will talk with thee of wrongs the recollection of which shall now lie dormant,' said he.

The abbot mused a minute, and seeing one chance of final security yet remaining, and satisfied that Garston was not to be persuaded at that time to act decisively against the person of the knight, he stood silent while he left the dungeon, Gesta carrying the wasted corpse of his mother in his arms, trembling under the melancholy burden which he was scarcely able to support, but still determined to bear it away before it should suffer further injury, or perish. The knight, touched with Gesta's filial spirit, felt his chivalric nature roused to assist him in his object, and, drawing his keen sword, he declared himself determined to cut down whoever should attempt to take the body from its natural owner. He kept all at bay while Gesta passed through the dark passages of the prisons to the entrance, which the porter, compelled by the sight of Lord Hugh's weapon, unfastened for his egress.

Across the green Gesta hurried with his burden, and jostled against a Hebrew girl, who, turning, caught his arm with agitated delight.—It was Belaset. They articulated each other's name with surprise.

'Where is my dear master?—what has become of Leoni?' she breathlessly asked.

'Hush! or you will be overheard, they are not far off,' said Gesta.

'I must see them directly—I have dreadful news for them. O, Gesta, Keturah, who was more than a sister to me, is lost! is dead! and my angel mistress is—but what are you carrying there?' She shrank back as one of Myrza's lifeless arms, dislodged from the breast where it has been covered like the face with a mantle, fell loosely dangling by Gesta's side, carrying with it the concealing garment, which dropping to the ground, left the dead features exposed. At the same instant Gesta staggered beneath the weight, and said, faintly—

'This is my mother's body? lead

me somewhere where I may rest, unobserved, with it, before I bury it. Ask me nothing more till then.'

'Your mother's body!' repeated Belaset; then looking in his face she exclaimed—'good angels keep us! you look like a ghost yourself! Come after me; my mother and father are both gone to St. Botolph's fair, you can rest in their house and tell me what has happened without being seen by any one. We will go the bye way to it, there are few folks about our quarter just now.'

She tripped down a narrow foot thoroughfare, which wound round the back of the Jew's quarter, between the walls of Jewish courtyards; only a few squalid children paddling in the little pools of dirty water, with which the way was diversified, were seen in front, but a quick martial tread sounded behind. Gesta proceeded with rapid steps until his foot was on the threshold of Belaset's home, he then turned his head to see who followed, and was greatly relieved by the sight of Lord Hugh, unaccompanied.

The crusader, when Gestastopped, came up to him, and begged, in courteous terms, to be allowed to enter with him, as he wished to say something to him in secret. Belaset was easily persuaded, hoping good to the merchant and his daughter from Lord Hugh's returning friendship.

In a small and neat kitchen, where cakes were baking on a circular hearth heaped with glowing peat, Belaset spread some smooth green rushes evenly on the floor, and upon them Gesta laid the corpse of his mother on which he wistfully gazed, then, sighing, covered it with a sacking wrapper which Belaset gave him. The damsel next set stools for him and for Lord Hugh, and while the latter was making inquiries concerning the merchant, which Gesta was afraid to answer lest treachery should be intended, she warmed and spiced some wine, stirring honey into it, and presenting a cup of it, with a humble deportment, first to the knight and then to Gesta,

kindness lighting her eye, as the latter drank to her with a glance of heartfelt meaning.

'This revives me,' said he.

'You must feel strangely still,' remarked the knight, 'having been recently on the edge of death—and such a death! Had I arrived ten minutes later you would have been as your mother is.'

'I should indeed,' said Gesta; 'and the horrible sensations I underwent when I was recovering will never be erased from my memory; they were even worse than the dying pains I suffered while suspended.' He trembled from head to foot as he spoke.

'Now as to Jocenus, be not afraid of telling me where he is hid,' said the knight; 'for I swear by the holy sepulchre of Jerusalem, I will not betray him—no, but rather serve him!'

Still Gesta was fearful.

'How shall I convince you?' said the crusader. 'I have pledged my word as a knight to you; I have sworn by an oath which I should be accursed if I broke; yet you will not trust me. I am convinced you know where the merchant is.'

'I do,' said Gesta; 'but the prophets forbid I should, by imprudence bring any more trouble on him, he has wrongfully endured too much already.'

'I wish to see him—to speak to him—to tell him I am anxious to atone for my haste in believing the lying statements of one whose aim has been to ruin him,' said Lord Hugh.

Gesta's eyes glistened; his face was illumined with a sorrowful joy. 'My Lord,' said he, 'were I to take you to him, he would hardly understand you, for his mind is in a state of complete distraction; he believes his daughter lost to him, and you could say nothing to comfort him which would be of any avail.'

'Let me try,' said the knight, earnestly; 'I once had some interest in his heart, perhaps I have a little left there still. I am not without hopes that I shall be able

to scatter some of the gloom which surrounds him.'

'The prophets grant you may!' exclaimed Gesta, reluctantly yielding to the crusader's wish. 'I will place his life and peace then in your power; if you deceive me, and betray him—'

The knight's cheek flushed with anger at the repetition of the doubt.

'I have given my word, which I never yet broke to friend or foe,' said he, rising.

'That word I now trust,' said Gesta: 'You will forgive a caution which fidelity to the merchant required. Jocenus is in the tower which my miserable mother occupied. She wished to be laid there, and I shall proceed, as soon as it is perfectly dark, to the water-side, and convey her body across in a boat belonging to one of the Jewish people about here. If you choose to go with me and Belaset, you shall see your former Hebrew friend.'

The sun had gone down on the Witham, when the boat, rowed with a single oar, moved silently and unseen upon the water, and stopped at the bank on which the solitary tower stood. The crusader leaped out, and Gesta and Belaset followed, bearing between them the corpse of Myrza, now sewn up in canvass. Gesta's whistle brought a labourer down—

'Is it you, master Gesta? you are welcome back,' said the man. 'We began to fear some harm had befallen you. Master Leoni is up with the merchant.'

'I am glad to hear that,' said Gesta; 'but just step outside here and help me up stairs with this sad load I carry. I have been somewhat ill-treated since I left you, and am weaker than ordinary.'

'What is it?' said the man.

'The body of the woman whose tower this was—my mother's body,' replied Gesta; 'she died in prison, and I have contrived to bring her corpse away from the savages who would have defaced and burnt it.'

'The witch is gone then, is she, at last,' said the labourer: 'well, let

me fetch a torch, and then I will carry it up for you.'

'No torch is wanted,' said Gesta; 'surely a stout fellow like thee is not affrighted at a few shadows? Come, take it over thy shoulder, that is the best way.'

'Why for you, master Gesta, I will,' said the labourer, who by no means relished the task, and started like a nervous woman when he found himself in possession of the body. 'I will only take it to the top,' said he, very decidedly, as he moved slowly up the dizzy corkscrew-shaped stairs, those which Gesta and Leoni ascended when they visited Myrza together.

'Very well,' said Gesta; then turning to Belaset and the knight, who had remained unseen outside, he whispered to them to follow him as softly as possible, which they did, after he had fastened the door inside.

Jocenus was sitting with his greyhound on his knees in the room where we last left him; his chin was sunken on his breast, his eyes looked swollen and heavy, and his whole appearance betokened listless despondency and unbroken melancholy. Leoni was leaning his elbow carelessly on a table opposite; anxiety marked his handsome features as he gazed on his friend, and his apparel was dusty. He turned his head hastily and listened, the next moment a footstep crossed the large room adjoining, and Gesta abruptly entered.

'Ah, welcome to you!' exclaimed Leoni, meeting with equal fervour the outstretched hand offered to him.

'You found him wofully changed,' whispered Gesta, glancing toward the apathetic Jocenus.

'Changed indeed! misfortune has destroyed his reason,' said Leoni.

'It is not the first instance of the sort I have heard of,' said Gesta, sighing, as he thought of his mother's story. 'I have passed through some strange adventures since I left the merchant; I have found friends, oh, rare event! among Christians. I have even found some Christian in-

dividuals disposed to do justice to Hebrews!—after this shall we say miracles have ceased? I have been allowed to think of myself as an earl's son. I have seen my mother die, and have been knocked down by my father. I have been half hanged. Finally, I have brought hither Belaset, and the crusader, for whose son's death Judith and Jocenus have been condemned.'

'Belaset—where is she?' vehemently exclaimed Leoni.

'Here—here, Leoni,' replied the agitated damsel, springing into the room, and bursting into tears as he wrung her hand.

'Belaset,' said he, looking inquiringly in her face, 'you have bad news for me.'

'Yes—oh, yes!' she stammered. 'Keturah, Master Leoni, is drowned! I saw her go down—I heard her last shriek, oh, I can never forget it!' Involuntarily she laid her hands on her ears.

'It is as I thought then,' exclaimed Leoni, sinking down on his seat in dismay. 'Oh, poor girl! Little did we expect this. So happy as we were likely to be. Tell me, Belaset, exactly how it happened. Hide nothing from me.'

She told him that, unable to rest, she had given herself up to her lady's accusers as one of her handmaids, only begging to be allowed to wait upon her still; she then described the forced journey her mistress had taken with herself and Keturah, and the obstinacy of Royston and Gower in crossing the marsh. Leoni heard her silently until she came to the sinking of the horse and its two riders, he then started up, and went down with hurried steps to the tower-postern, that he might indulge his feelings unwitnessed.

The crusader, entering the small room, stood silently observing the merchant. Compunction and regret clouded his martial countenance while noticing the ravages which trouble had made in the Hebrew's dignified person. Jocenus was first disturbed from his stupor by the howling of the hound.

'Be still, dog, do!' said he, with languid impatience, slowly raising his eyes. The next moment the greyhound fell to the floor.

'Do you come hither, Lord Hugh, to mock me, or to kill me?' he demanded.

'Neither—but to do you good,' replied the knight; 'give me your hand; this is our first meeting since I returned from the Holy Land.'

'Our hands shall never meet in amity again!' exclaimed the merchant. 'Had I never known you I should have had my precious child with me still. Now she is—oh, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!—what she is, I dread to think of! my brain turns giddy at the thought—my heart burns in my breast!'

'Be of good cheer,' said Lord Hugh; 'brighter days are dawning for you. It will not be long before the fair dame, Judith, will be honourably released from confinement.'

'You deride me, knightly sir!' cried the merchant, twitching his robe and beard impatiently, and speaking with acrimony—'you deride me! I pray you tell me if the prince Royal of England hath sworn to you that he will release her honourably? If he hath, tell him this—her father will not take his oath. It is not worth a hind's fee—and so trouble me no more—let me go to my grave as quietly as I can.'

'The prince!' exclaimed the knight, surprised; 'what has he had to do with fair Judith?'

'He carried her from the castle,' answered Jocenus, speaking between his teeth; 'he took her from death to splendid infamy. Why did she not lay herself on the road!—she was no true child of mine that hour. Oh, Judith!—my injured idol!—my abused treasure!—my lost, lost angel!'

'I will right this injury!' exclaimed the crusader, his voice sounding stern, and his right hand grasping the hilt of the sword by his side. 'If he were ten times a prince-royal he should account to me for this act. By our lady, he shall yield her, or I am no son of chivalry!'

But there was no healing balm for the father's wounded spirit in this promise. He loved his daughter's fame as much as her life; and believing the former sullied, he ceased to regard the latter. The love of virtue was the stamina of his character; like some of the noble ancients he preferred it before every thing, and thought existence worthless without it.

'Love for you, sir knight, has brought destruction upon me and mine,' said Jocenus. 'I saw your motherless boy playing in the streets, and loved his father's image in him; I took him to my daughter, she, too, hapless girl! prized him for your sake. He was pretty and engaging, and his presence became dear unto us, until one fatal evening, he left my Judith later than usual, and unattended; after that we heard no more of him, until my daughter was proclaimed his crucifier! Could Lord Hugh believe the report? I asked myself. Was it possible? Had he not known me and my child—seen our hearts and minds unveiled in our home? Did he not know that we were as incapable as himself of cruelty? Oh, friendship! thou wert an idle word, and no better, if he gave credence to the slander of our interested enemies.'

'I do not attempt to excuse myself,' said the knight; 'yet was I to disbelieve the word of a minister of holy church? Such an one told me that he was hid in thy garden the evening of my Hugh's disappearance, and saw, with his own eyes, thee, thy daughter, and the young man known as thy nephew, (he who now led me hither) with Hugh's murdered body beside the well, near your garden gate; he also averred that he had heard fair Judith say she had seen him crucified. Could I—durst I—doubt such an assertion?'

'It was the superior of Icanno—the false governor of the boy—who spoke that lie!'

'It was,' said the knight; 'and, merchant, a lie I believe it to be. Albeit my son is canonised as a mar-

tyr, I believe him to have been no martyr; for a lady, a religious and honourable lady, one of noble rank, has pledged her word to me that she will prove the abbot false!

'That lady must be the bishop's sister,' said Jocenus.

'The same; she has altered my mind on the whole affair. I now mourn my son, not as malignantly slain, but as the victim of a melancholy accident;' he sighed; Jocenus echoed that sigh with a deeper, and drooping his brow on the head of his bound, said—

'Lady Isabella will not lose her reward—Jehovah will bless her. But all this is nothing to me now, for my daughter is lost to me. I never can, I never will, see her again!' In a lower voice he muttered, 'I deserve all I suffer. Fool that I was not to save her by complying with the abhorred prior's proposal! Had I given the zecchins she might have been now undefiled and free.' He groaned, and shook his head, and forgot the presence of the knight.

The latter was anxious to know all the circumstances that were connected with the event he deplored.

'What proposal was that the villain made to you?'

'He offered to send me and my daughter safely to the sea-side, with the bulk of our wealth untouched, if I would give him a certain sum of money which he needed for the legate. Why—why did I not yield to the offer? I have sacrificed my child! She has been destroyed by her father! Oh, fool! fool! fool!'

The vehemence of his self-indignation, and the fire of his proud virtue on his daughter's behalf, were well observed by the crusader, who admired him in his wretched condition even more than he had formerly in his prosperity.

'I wish that I could see fair Judith!' exclaimed Lord Hugh, starting from his reflective posture. 'Nay, I must see her! Once thou knowest, merchant, I was instrumental in preserving her for thee—perhaps I may be so again. It may

not be too late to restore her to thee as thou wouldst have her.'

'The prince! the prince! my Lord Hugh, has detained her in his power ever since the morning following her imprisonment,' said Jocenus, with irritated impatience, his face assuming a stern and revengeful expression, while he trembled with suppressed passion. 'Can I make the gossip world believe she is unsullied after that?'

'But still you should not add to the wrongs she has received by renouncing her, even in idea,' said the knight, moved with a deeper compassion for her than he durst acknowledge to himself, and speaking with a little embarrassment in his tone, and with a small spreading spot of colour on his sun-browned cheek. 'And surely the daughter of a father so virtuous might justly claim to be considered proof against guilt under the most trying circumstances. To my own mind she is a woman who would never bear an injured name one single day. At least, if she would, she must have altered much since I knew her first.'

'Well spoken, noble knight!' said Gesta, entering from the inner room, where he had left the body of his mother. 'I, so long intimate with her as a brother, can vouch her to be of such pure gold, that let her be put through a thousand fires, she shall suffer no loss, but only shine the brighter, and be the more precious. Shame to thee, merchant of Israel, that thou requiest others thus to stand forward in her defence!'

'Shall my daughter need defence, and I keep my senses?' exclaimed Jocenus, passionately. 'The curse of calumny never, until now, could tarnish her spotless name, and that was my proud joy! I would never have sunk under the loss of aught else but her bright fame. Now that is gone, I have nothing more to enjoy in this world—nothing—nothing!'

He burst into a fit of tears and groans which greatly distressed Lord Hugh and Gesta; afterwards

he relapsed into his pitiable despondency, from which they forbore again to rouse him.

Sitting down, Lord Hugh conversed in a low tone with Gesta, on the disappearance of Judith. The knight forcibly expressed his determination to go to the Boar's Den, and demand that she should be yielded up.

'Might not that expose her to danger from the abbot?' suggested Gesta.

'It might do so indeed,' said Lord Hugh, folding his arms, and casting his eyes down, perplexed. 'Yet she must not—shall not—remain longer in the prince's power—or I will unbuckle this good sword of mine, and never wear it more! Unfortunate—ill used Judith!'

Just then the gloomy eyes of Gesta gazed on the crusader's face, filled with a peculiar anguish, whose source lay deep within the young man's heart; and as Lord Hugh, turning his head, met their glance, he was irresistibly struck. Gesta withdrew his gaze, and a sigh, that he would fain have suppressed, followed. Instantly the knight connected Judith and her formerly-supposed cousin in his mind, remembering how firmly devoted, even unto death, the latter had appeared for her and Jocenus at the private meeting in the bishop's apartment.

'He was long valued as her brother—lived in intimate friendship with her—has admired her supereminently,' thought Lord Hugh, recalling Gesta's recent words. 'I think I heard somewhere that they were about to be betrothed to each other. Why not?—why should this affect me?—she could never be aught to me. The abbot has accused me of keeping her image too near my heart. I may have done so unwittingly—I may have deceived myself—but this must not be hereafter—I must remember that I am a soldier of the cross.' And he raised a small relic, that he wore, devoutly to his lips.

'You do perfectly believe that

Judith is innocent, my lord?' asked Gesta.

'I do,' warmly replied the knight. 'I rely on Lady Isabella's word to me. I place absolute dependence on her asseveration. And if by any means the merchant's fair daughter be rescued from the prince uncontaminated, I will make all the amends to her possible. What think you, is there any one she prefers, for whom I might obtain a favour at court, or elsewhere?'

Gesta lifted a brand from the hearth, and affected to be engaged in knocking off the ashes from it, while he rather hesitatingly remarked, that he did not positively know that she preferred any one; she had refused many proposals from persons of her own nation; he fancied, but he might be wrong, that her heart was engaged somewhere, but there were insurmountable obstacles; she was a woman who would grace a throne, even were it a Christian one.

The knight caught at the last words:—'Christian did you say?'

'Christian,' repeated Gesta, laying a stress upon the word; 'she is a Christian in her heart, that I know full well; yet she is a Jewess in her feelings towards the Hebrew people. She thinks the Christians on the whole no better than they, though they arrogate so much.'

The knight looked displeased for the moment. 'I must remind thee, young sir,' said he, gravely, 'that the Christians are so called because they are followers of Jesus Christ, the Almighty Saviour of the world; and the Hebrews are justly held in reproach by us, because they not only put Him to death, but have ever since blasphemed His glorious name. The Hebrews are blind, stiff-necked infidels, and as such they—'

'Deserve your pity at the most,' cried Gesta, hastily. 'Will you persuade the Jews that your master came from heaven by persecuting them? And the Nazarenes are inconsistent, permit me to observe, noble knight; they leave the records'

of their prophet entirely to their priests, and an ignorant observer like myself would say they had a score of heavenly mediators at least instead of one only; or what means the continual prayers they offer to the mother of their Master, and to a number of names beside? I myself, touching the records of your prophet, will venture to assert, that, Jew as I have been to the present moment, I know more of them than you who are a Christian.'

'That may be,' said Lord Hugh, evading the subject, 'but what reasons have you for believing that Judith has become a Christian?'

His manner was eager, as if some probabilities were arising in his mind which had not been there before. Gesta's acutely-jealous feelings had been deadened, now they at once revived, though he would have prevented them; he too well read the springing impulses of the crusader's heart, and he could not bring himself to promote, any further than he had already done, an understanding between him and Judith.

'It will be to more purpose, methinks, my lord,' said he, 'to consider the best means of restoring her to her father, than to debate on what opinions she may entertain regarding religion.' So saying, he arose from his seat, and threw on his high cap.

Leoni here re-entered the door from the postern staircase, with marks of grief on his countenance, mixed with sterner expressions.

'By our law, friend Gesta,' he exclaimed with violence, 'I will have justice done me for Keturah's death. I will go to King Henry's throne myself and demand it, if there be no other way. What had she done to the cursed Nazarenes, that she should be dragged into a horrible fen, and murdered—I say murdered—in so frightful a manner? I will have justice, I swear, by all that Israel holds sacred!'

'Master jeweller,' cried a strange voice from the doorway opening into the large room, which made all start, 'you know what it is to be injured,

I hear! then give protection for a few hours to one who has been injured more than you could possibly have been.'

With these words, a powerful young man, of thirty years of age, stepped boldly into the room, stopping short within a few yards of the door, from which he had so unexpectedly issued. His long yellow hair curled down over his doublet, his fair Saxon complexion was peculiarly pale, and in his blue eyes burnt a fire which told of ungovernable feelings of revenge, mingled with restless dread.

He quickly ascertained who were present, and at first seemed to shrink a little, but instantly he resumed his bold air, and firmly exclaimed—

'I am Richard of Bargate, the hostellerie-keeper. Do ye not know me?'

'Hardly,' answered Leoni, speaking for the rest, and looking astonished at the intrusion. 'You were not expected here, Richard. How did you find out this tower? Who admitted you? And what is it you seek here?'

'One question at a time if you please, master jeweller, and I shall answer you to your satisfaction, I dare say. In the first place, I found it out as a hunted quarry finds out a hole to hide in; I was flying from some of the earl of Lincoln's men who were following me on a hard chase, when I thought of this den of the witch Myrza, which I had noticed some little while back; and though I would, at any ordinary time, rather have gone ten miles about than have passed it, yet life just now was so sweet that I forgot everything else but how to preserve that; so finding the door unfastened, for a person had stepped outside it but a moment before, I slipped up—and here I am. To speak the certain fact, sirs, I did not expect to see any one here but the witch. As it is, I crave from you—to answer your third question, master jeweller—protection for a few hours only.'

'What have you done to need protection?' inquired the knight.

The hostelrie-keeper made an obeisance to the querist, with a sign of surprise, perceiving by his dress that he was a Christian knight of rank, who had been in the holy war, then regarding him more attentively, exclaimed—

‘Is it true that I see the noble lord of Gant here? I heard that you had returned from Palestine, my lord, but thought it only a gossip’s tale. I knew your pretty boy; I have often stopped him near the Bargate, to ask him how he did. But his martyrdom has not been the only shameful deed Lincoln has witnessed lately.’

This roused the miserable merchant.

‘No,’ he abruptly cried, shaking his head mournfully, ‘I know one more shameful! Oh, Abraham!—father Abraham! a worse deed was never done! My innocent daughter dragged from her father’s house—carried away, I know not whither—and lost beyond redemption, for ever lost!’

‘And I know an act as foul as any!’ exclaimed Leoni, striking his clenched hand loudly on the table, and speaking impetuously. ‘An unoffending damsel compelled to ride upon an overflowed marsh, and there drowned!’

A strange satisfaction was visible on the hostelrie-keeper’s face.

‘If you have all been wronged thus,’ said he, ‘you will surely have a fellow feeling for me.’

‘What have you done?’ demanded Lord Hugh.

‘Killed the earl of Lincoln!’ was the firm reply.

‘Hah! and thinkest thou that I will abet a dastardly murderer?’ exclaimed the knight, raising his scabbard and drawing his sword. ‘I, a sworn soldier of the cross! These persons may do as they list; but for me, I give you fair warning, fly, and seek a sanctuary elsewhere, for if those who seek you come into my presence I will give you up to them at once! aye, and aid them to secure you!’

‘Do so, lord of Gant, if you will;

from here I will not budge but by force,’ deliberately returned the Saxon. ‘Hark you, sirs,’ he cried with sudden energy, ‘and judge if what I have done be not excusable. From my boyhood I loved Margery, the daughter of the man who kept the Bargate-hostelrie before me, but her father would not let her speak to me. Seven years I waited, and no other but Margery could I fancy. Her father died, and she was mistress of the hostelrie; then I wooed her, and married her. We were happy, that every one knows, who knows anything of us. But on the night of the great banqueting in the palace, sirs, my doors were broken off their hinges, past midnight, and the earl of Lincoln’s men, like fiends let loose, turned my house inside out, as one may say, and carried off my Margery—what think you of that?’

‘It was a detestable and cruel work of violence,’ answered Leoni, with force.

‘They who did it deserved the worst treatment they could receive,’ responded Gesta, no less decidedly than Leoni, though moved by feelings of horror for his unnatural father’s fate.

‘This was great provocation, I allow,’ said the knight; ‘but the king permits no man to avenge his own private injuries; he or his appointed justices are your only lawful avengers.’

‘Ha—ha! the king or his justices say you, my lord de Gant?’ repeated Richard, with a bitter laugh. ‘Why, after I missed my wife, and had spent eight weary hours in searching for her, I went to the earl himself, and he told me that she was in his castle, and should remain there as long as he chose, and then his fellows drove me out through his courts by setting a score of dogs at me. What did I then but went to the justices’ court in the palace, where the great men were then sitting, and told my tale. But the earl had prepared them for my complaints, and they turned the whole matter into jest, only threatening

me with a dungeon if I slandered my feudal lord abroad. I was then almost beside myself, I shut up my hostelry and walked seventy miles, sirs, to the place where the king was hearing causes. The earl had been beforehand with me there, too, and I lost my labour. His highness frowned on me, and gave me no satisfaction but this—'I have been too much pestered with fellows like you—away, while your neck is out of a halter.' I threw myself on my knees before him. 'Justice, King Henry!—justice—justice?' I cried; and as I saw my last hope failing me, I believe I wept like a pining baby. 'The fellow is mad!' cried the king. 'Turn him out, guard!' and so, sirs, I was thrust out; and the last words his highness said were these—'Your lord is now in Lincoln, go to him again, and if he is not inclined to restore your wife without offer him a barrel of your daintiest malmsey, as a ransom for her. The baron cannot resist good wine.' The courtiers about him laughed—the officers who were forcing me out, laughed—and with no more satisfaction than this I came back to Lincoln.

'This is Christian justice!' cried Leoni, emphatically.

'Well, sirs,' continued Richard, 'after this I saw the earl again, and implored him to give me back my poor girl. I told him it was the last time I should entreat. He was fool, and villain, and madman enough to strike me—I seemed to put up with the insult tamely, and so came away. But you will not wonder when I tell you that a burning fire was gathering in my heart the while. I could not bear to go into my solitary house. I wandered all night long in the streets; and not one moment's peace have I had until this hour. I will not hide anything from you, sirs; I went into my hostelry this evening for the first time since I lost Margery. As I am alive, I meant no harm then. But as I was standing at the door, miserable enough! I heard the earl's bugle, and a thought came into my mind,

which I did not try to drive off. I came out to the gate as the earl rode up with his men. Pretending to be jocular, I said that I hoped he did not intend to send me back my wife again, as I had found that I could do very well without such an incumbrance. He fell into the snare, and cracked his abominable jokes about Margery, not suspecting aught. While he was in the height of his impudent humour, I fetched out a tankard of prime sack, such as I knew he was fond of, and cried to him, 'Wassel, my lord baron!—wassel!' He took the cup from me, after I had held it to my own lips an instant, to prevent suspicion. My hand did not tremble—no—neither when I passed the cup from me, nor when I took it again, and saw that my wronger had emptied it to the bottom. Could I have restrained my exulting feelings I might now have been safe. But as the earl spurred his horse up the Strait, I cried after him—'Baron, you have robbed me of half my life—I have taken all yours! 'Twas good sack that you drank—there was justice in it! Tell your beads, lord baron! Confess yourself to your priest! You have drank your death!' I then fled; the High-street was in an uproar directly; I heard my name shouted in this way—'Richard of Bargate has poisoned the earl of Lincoln!' I ran down Wykenford, and up the hill toward the marshes, then made hitherwards, and here you see me.'

'Is the earl dead?' demanded Gesta, speaking with startling quickness.

'I believe that he is dying,' answered the hostelry-keeper.

'Awful!' exclaimed Gesta, inwardly. 'Well do I recall my wretched mother's words to him—words that it is evident will be strictly verified;—'Before the clouds which are now in the heavens have all melted before the sun, you will be lying with your grandson under a canopy of stone, and within four narrow and dark stone walls.' She spoke too of an arrow that, before

he entered his castle-gates, would pierce his heart in spite of armour, and which no chirurgeon would be able to pluck away. Now, though no arrow has pierced him, yet the poison has.'

'Is the door by which you entered this tower now secure?' asked Leoni, addressing the hostelry-keeper.

'Yes,' was the reply, 'I took care to fasten it behind me as soon as I was inside. But no one saw me come near this place, and I am very certain it will never be supposed that I am here.'

'Well,' said Leoni, 'so much I pity you for the wrongs you have received, that I give my voice for you to be allowed to conceal yourself here as long as you can. But there stands one,' pointing to Gesta, 'who has a peculiar right to a paramount voice in this matter.'

'You will recollect. Lord Hugh,' said Gesta, 'that before the bishop I stated my father to be dead, but this I have found since to be an error, which arose from some misunderstanding of my mother's words. My father was this earl of Lincoln, a man whose end I could scarcely have expected would be better than it has proved. There is not one part of his conduct with which I am acquainted that I can remember with pleasure. Yet, because he bears the name of my *father*, I must feel some touch of nature toward him. Richard of Bargate, you have, by your own confession, deliberately killed him; you must therefore either quit this place or I will quit it. I acknowledge your provocations have been very great. I pity you and your unfortunate wife. But as you have wilfully destroyed him who gave me life, I say again we must not remain under the same roof. Now I reflect, you can very well stay here,' he added; 'as I shall not be able to rest without going into the city myself, as soon as possible, to make inquiries as to the earl's real state.'

'And I, too, must depart,' said the knight. 'I shall not reveal your

hiding-place,' (speaking to the hostelry.) 'I abhor your crime, but I also view you as a deeply injured man, prompted to it by injustice that would almost have made a murderer of the best of us.'

Richard sat down in a corner of the hearth, saying that in a few hours he intended to make his way to the sea-side, and so escape to Flanders. Jocenus had taken scarcely any notice of his appalling statement, but still sat stooping, leaning over his hound, absorbed in his own surpassing misery. Lord Hugh turned to him, and while looking upon him in silence, bitterly regretted that he had been the means of bringing such distress on him and his daughter.

'For a little while only I leave you, merchant,' said he, throwing into his tones the utmost kindness and speaking only for him to hear. 'Since I know that you and fair Judith have been falsely accused, I will move heaven and earth to restore you to happiness again. I beseech you do not despair. When I come to you again, which shall be speedily, I shall bring you tidings of good.'

Still the merchant shook his head and groaned, exclaiming—'Happiness exists no longer for me! my home is in ashes! my wealth is gone—my idolised—my beautiful girl—is lost to me!'

'No, no, merchant, you must not think so,' argued the pitying crusader. 'My life for her perfect innocence. I shall make inquiries concerning her from the prince himself and she shall be rendered up, yet so as that she may not fall into the abbot's hand again, until her guiltlessness of my son's death has been openly proved, and this abbot's power to order her execution is taken from him.'

The knight and Gesta left the tower at the same time. They were ferried down the river by a strange boatman in the place of Philip the rabbit-keeper, who was detained in the palace, until the legate and the lord sheriff should arrive in Lincoln.

They found the city in new confusion. The indolent and corrupt retainers of the castle were riding hither and thither, spreading the dreadful news that the earl had been poisoned by Richard of Barga. Every now and then their war shout was raised as if the men were drunken with the wild excitement of the hour. From the suburb of Wykenford, the Norman nobles, hastily mounted, were spurring up the hill, while the lower classes on foot thronged in crowds about them, running at full speed. The palace gates stood open, and the prince was recognised walking swiftly across to the also open gates of the castle court, followed by Bishop Groteste in his plain closet dress, with a large velvet bound volume under his arm. The two distinguished personages were surrounded by a band of servants. Not a voice was raised when they were seen, not a cap lifted into the air, hardly was the ordinary curiosity of the commoners manifested; the death of a man so powerful in this county as the earl, threw every other point of interest in the shade.

The crusader and Gesta separated with a look and a hurried whisper expressive of one important object which both had in view. Each then entered the crowded courts of the castle, the crusader mingling with the Norman nobles, and Gesta with the inferior crowd.

Lord Hugh was stopped as he was pressing on to the mound which upheld the keep, by the velvet-clad, and slender figure of a page, belonging to the palace, the same, who, on a former occasion, conducted Jocus through the banqueting hall. After receiving from him a private message, the knight turned, and followed him to the presence of the Lady Isabella.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE awful agony of the dying earl was shocking to witness. He raved incessantly against the witch Myrza who had predicted his death; and as though she were alive to suffer

punishment, and he would recover to inflict it, gave vent to the most monstrous threats. It was remarked that he said little against the immediate cause of his fearful doom, but levelled his fury all against Myrza. Being informed that she was dead, he sent his servants, every few minutes, with fresh directions to the prisons on the town green, commanding by one that her body should be staked and burnt, by another that it should be thrown out to the dogs, and by a third that it should be quartered and beheaded, and that the different parts should be fastened over the four city gates.

His terrible cries sounded all through the great tower in which he lay. After the third paroxysm of mortal anguish which he had had, his last messengers returned, and told him, with fear and horror in their countenances as they beheld his swollen and blackened features, that the body of the witch had been carried off by the deformed Jew who had lived with the merchant Jocus.

'Pestilence and furies!' roared the earl, throwing himself off the couch on which he had been laid, and glaring around with ferocious gestures. 'There shall not a worthless cur of ye live to see the morrow's light unless the body of this infernal hag be ground to powder before my face! Dead or alive, fetch her here before me! Bring her under this roof that I may see her detestable bones consumed! and fetch that dog hither, too, that calls her mother! By St. George and St. Denis! be he son of mine or of Beelzebub, die he shall! Why stand ye all staring at me like owls in the dark? Ha! have ye had a hand in their witcheries? Body-o-me! the fellow of you that dares stay here another instant, shall hang from the canopy of my bed! Away, convicted knaves!—away!—ye are all eager enough to see the last breath out of me!'

Gesta, a minute after, was touched on the shoulder by one of the earl's henchmen, and bade to follow

him, which he reluctantly did, fearing some new danger.

'The young man is here, my lord,' said a trembling page to the earl, at the door of his chamber; and the next instant Gesta found himself impelled into the presence of his father. At the first sight of the half-naked figure before him, he turned back to the door, and would have gone out, but the men who crowded the gallery prevented him.

'Ho!—I have you then—though your mother has escaped me!' exclaimed the earl, with the air of a madman. 'Do you see what she and you have done to me?—look at my face!' and, snatching up a bright cuirass, he used it as a mirror. 'There—there! look at those hideous spots! and at those swellings! they are the fruits of her infernal arts, and you have aided her!'

'I!' cried Gesta, indignantly; baron, I never assisted in her arts—I never had anything to do with them; and Myrza, who, I am glad to think, is now beyond the reach of human malice, never wilfully injured you.'

'Lying knave!' shouted the earl, hurling the cuirass at Gesta, which he narrowly missed by springing on one side. 'These torments which I now bear, thou and her have brought upon me! Fellows without there—hither knaves!'

Three retainers obeyed the loud call.

'Bind this dog hand and foot, and thrust him into the turret-dungeon,' ordered the writhing earl; 'and if it should happen that that hostelrye vagabond's sack proves my death, d'ye hear! fling him over the ramparts within five minutes after I have drawn my last breath! Which of you rascals takes oath to see it done?'

The answers were prompt enough, for the men were eager to preserve themselves from the fury of the despot, and were not principled enough to care whether it was right or wrong.

'I disdain to resist your slaves, baron!' exclaimed Gesta, standing

passive in the insolent grasp of the retainers, and only fastening on them a look of withering contempt. 'Let them do your pleasure on me—slaves as they are! They are your *slaves*—they are not men. They are slaves to your corrupt passions—to your depraved will—to your ignorant, but deadly malice. It was these, or such as these, who carried off from a quiet home the wife of the man who has exacted so tremendous a retribution—it was these, or such as these, who fired the beautiful and happy home of the Hebrew merchant, and his daughter; it was—'

'By St. Denis of France! an' thou pratest more here, while I am suffering the pains of hell, I will rend thy hated tongue from thy mouth, and spurn thee myself into the fosse under my battlements!' bellowed the earl, with such frightful violence, that terror was communicated to every individual within hearing, excepting only Gesta, who stood apparently unmoved.

At this moment the door was thrown wide open, and, without waiting to be formally announced, the bishop entered, with his large volume under his arm, accompanied by the prince, who was followed by Aaron, the Jewish leech; the latter watched by the attendants of both the prince and bishop.

'I have heard that thou desirest me to help thee to a clean conscience, my lord of Lincoln,' said the bishop, 'I have hastened hither at my best speed.'

As soon as the earl saw the short, stout, plain figure of Grosteste, and beheld his face, on which uncompromising truth was written in clear characters, he suppressed his rage, and muttered to the man who was supporting him at the side of the couch to see 'the catiff,' meaning his son, conveyed away whither he had said.

The bishop observed Gesta, and that his arms were bound, he therefore fastened his piercing eye on the men who were ordering him with domineering language from the room.

Gesta now changed his mind, and resisted the retainers. The earl glanced at the bishop fearful lest he should interfere, but Grosteste merely listened and looked on observingly, though his face expressed high displeasure. The earl's myrmidons surrounded Gesta, and one laying his hand on his mouth, the rest endeavoured to force him out through the door by a quick and adroit movement made simultaneously; but Gesta broke from them, and called out to the prince and bishop for protection for his life.

'Body-o'-me! art thou not a serf of my chatellany?—a fellow who belongeth to me, and me only?' cried the earl, eager to prevent the answer of the two great personages. 'Away, out of my sight; no appeals to the royal Edward will serve thee—he knows too well the rights of a noble who hath a few hundred stout soldiers, to follow him or his father to the field; and the bishop, I wot, dealeth but with the spiritual affairs of his diocese. Henchmen! away with him to the turret.'

'You forget that you are in the grasp of death yourself,' exclaimed Gesta. 'Must you be to the last moment of your life, a ruthless, despicable tyrant? You dare not deny before these noble persons that you are my father! You dare not deny that my mother was cruelly treated by you; and that when you knew her first, she was a light-hearted, innocent girl. Her want, and extreme misery, were alone caused by you. It was through your seduction, and desertion of her, that she became a practiser of the secret arts. You say I have assisted my mother to cause your death by magic—I solemnly deny that I have done so. You have no proof that I have, and you know in your heart that I have not. Noble prince and bishop, scarcely one half hour before Myza died in the city prison, where, by your leave, I had gone to keep her company, the earl came thither, and acknowledged, against his will, but unequivocally, that I was his son. At that time he had nothing to

accuse me of; but just now, when I was below in the court, among the people whom the news of his having been poisoned had drawn together, and while I was listening anxiously for some certain intelligence of his condition, his servant called me here, and the baron, instead of speaking to me as a son—one indeed who has reason to feel bitterly against him, for he caused my deformity which you see, by his bad usage of me in my infancy—instead of doing this, my lords, and giving me at least a kind word or two that I might remember afterwards to his advantage, he abused me intolerably, gave his men orders to bind me, and directed that, if he died, I was to be thrown over his ramparts within five minutes afterwards, an order that I know his men are vile enough to execute.'

'My lord of Lincoln, is this young man your son?' asked the bishop, with an air that effectually prevented the falsehood which was rising to the earl's lips.

'He is a base born churl—I know nothing of him,' was the muttered reply.

'I ask you again—and as you hope for pardon speak not other than that which is true,' said the bishop, 'is this young man your own son?'

'What an' if he be?' evaded the earl; 'how know I. He is a foul heretic—he has been half a Jew and half a sorcerer. By the mass, I were well off if every mongrel cur that thought he had a right to call me father were to come here baiting me with his relationship, and a murrain to it.'

'Have no fear, I will see to your safety,' said Grosteste, turning to Gesta, then speaking with authority to the retainers he bade them remove the young man whither they had been directed, but remember that they were answerable to the church for his safety.

'And now, earl,' said the prince, who stood near the bed, 'I have brought you the leech, for whom your servants have made search. He has come on the credit of my word that his robbery of your countess'

cabinets shall for the present be overlooked.'

'If he will rid me of that burning drug which was in the sack I swallowed, I will pardon it, and give him fifty crowns to boot!' cried the earl; and with this tempting promise, the wily Aaron drew near, and, falling upon his knees, appeared excessively penitent, and promised to do his very best for the earl.

'Set about thy task, man—let us have deeds instead of words,' said the bishop, impatient of his hypocrisy; 'lose no time; for the present, as I said to master Gesta so I say to thee, thou art safe here, as both he and you will be shortly wanted elsewhere.'

There had been a pause in the agonies produced by the poison which the earl had drank, and he not believing that he could possibly die, persuaded himself that the danger was over. As to a hereafter, he thought nothing of that. Men with consciences blunted and deadened as his, are not easily alarmed by a view of eternity, especially when with that torpid conscience is combined an utter lack of imagination.

The earl's chamber, like all the other rooms in the fortress, was low, and dark, and dirty, presenting a confused and cheerless appearance, the narrow slit in the wall being as usual the only window. There were not wanting here objects of magnificence, but the absence of anything like an attention to convenience, arrangement, and cleanliness, made them truly seem as they were, the embellishments of an habitation of a barbarous age. As yet tapestry had not come into general use, and the huge stones, cold and dark, which formed the walls, were uncovered, and looked much like those of a dungeon. The dogs had vacated the large sitting apartment, and were gathered in a group on a leopard's skin, that was spread by the bed upon the floor. It was evident that the one thing needful here was security. From the massive-studded

door, the eye glanced to the arms hung within reach over the bed, beneath a small silk banner of the earldom of Lincoln, and to the numerous pieces of armour on the tables and chairs, and even upon the altar under the image of St. Denis.

The earl himself was barely covered with a loose blue night robe, his coarse black hair was cut short over a low, receding forehead, which left the animal propensities of his nature stamped on the lower features of his face without relief.

The presence of the bishop subdued the vile ravings of his fury into a mere growl, but still he was in no fitting temper to receive the sacred elements which were brought into the room by attending priests. Grosteste endeavoured to lead him to a real confession, by fearlessly pointing out the nature of the moral laws, and the danger of dying impenitent and unforgiven. But when the bishop had concluded his solemn exordium, he perceived that his zeal might have been spared, for the earl only cried with a knowing laugh—

'Montjoye St. Denis! bishop, if there are so many ill deeds for which I need absolution, you will want a double offering. Ha—ha! you can drive a hard bargain on occasions, as well as the priests of Rome! But I can't pay another doit for this work!—it has cost me enough already. The abbot and the legate have taken all my sins away beforehand, bishop, and I have given them no trifle for that piece of service.'

'Thy money perish with thee,' the bishop could have said, but he wisely restrained his indignation, and again tried to move that earthly mind by spiritual eloquence. He might as well have preached to the dozen dogs which lay on the floor.

'Ha! body-o-me! I feel those horrible pains coming on again!' exclaimed the earl. 'If I am to have extreme unction, Bishop Grosteste, you had better make haste and give it to me.'

The priests officiously brought

near the consecrated elements and the other things used in the hallowed service.

'Take them back,' said the bishop, waving his hand decisively, 'these are the seals of repentance; where there is no repentance I will not administer them.'

The priests looked astonished; the earl grew livid with mingled pain and rage; the prince observed, as was his way, without interfering.

Few people, however bad, can rid themselves of an awe for the sacrament enjoined by our faith as a memorial of its Founder; there is something about it which finds a way to the heart in spite of all barriers. The earl did not like to be refused to partake of it, though he was insensible alike to the fear and love of God, but put off his chagrin by hoarsely calling out for a jack of wine.

'All's one! consecrated wine tastes no better than unconsecrated!' coarsely laughed he, after emptying the unshapely and enormous drinking vessel that one of his servants had handed to him. 'St. Denis, that was good! my inside was like a flaming mine, but the good liquor has cooled me wonderfully. No witch had drugged that. Sirrah squire who gavest it to me, I saw thee drink a thorough soldier's draught out of it, and if it were drugged it would prove thee mortal as well as me. That villain of Bargate only tasted of his poisoned sack to cozen me into drinking it, but if I was cozened by him once, I am not to be cozened a second time by him or any other knave!'

CHAPTER XXXII.

Two trumpets now blew a commanding blast in front of the castle-garrison, and the seneschal, who had the care of the ceremonies of the household, made his appearance to answer the summons. He saw, in imposing order, with religious banners, a band of knights, whose duty it was to protect the abbot and abbey of Crowland, mounted on

horses and attired in their crimson sur-coats. In the midst of them rode the cardinal-legate of Rome and the abbot, while behind followed the prior of Crowland, who assisted the abbot in his office, together with a train of monks and priests.

'The baron, may it please your eminence, is in the state apartments,' was the answer of the seneschal, to an interrogatory of the legate, after a lowly obeisance.

'And is there truth in the report which we have heard that he has been poisoned?' asked the abbot.

'Most certainly, your eminence. Richard, who kept the hostelrie by the Bargate, gave him poisoned sack, and he is in a dreadful condition—we do not expect him to live through the night.'

'What! was it the Saxon whose wife he stole away, who poisoned him?' cried the abbot, with a sardonic smile.

'The same, your eminence,' said the seneschal, also smiling, for he had made one in the exploit of taking Margery from the hostelrie.

'Why, a silly child might have foreseen this,' said the abbot, 'why did the baron suffer him to be at liberty? He should have left the wife, or have taken the husband too. But who is now with your lord?'

'The reverend bishop, and his highness Prince Edward, if it please your eminence, are with him now.'

'Soh! the bishop here already!' ejaculated the abbot, glancing meaningly at the legate, whose shrivelled face expressed hatred of the very name.

'My brother, you do wrong to give Robert Grosteste the title of bishop,' murmured the old dignitary, shaking with age and vindictive passion.

'I crave your pardon, eminent father,' said the abbot, with an appearance of humility, which certainly existed only in appearance; 'full well I know that Grosteste is excommunicated. Sir seneschal, you will remember that at present there is no bishop of Lincoln sanctioned by Rome. This man, whom you

call bishop, is banned for heresy, and contempt of the pope.'

'In the name of his holiness!' repeated the angry legate, in a cracked voice, lifting his arm excitedly—'in the name of his holiness, I will ban every living man who calls him bishop after this! every living man, sir seneschal! therefore let my ears be no more offended in this place with the sound.' The seneschal made a deep obeisance, that was received as a token of obedience, though he was far from intending to comply with the prohibition.

The noble churchmen alighted with their train, and ascended the steps of the keep-mound. On the second story of the tower, where the earl's principal rooms were, they left their monks, and together followed the seneschal to the chamber in which the poisoned baron was, the abbot's knights having been lodged in the garrison.

'Ha! by the mass! here are those who would give the sacrament to the——!' exclaimed the earl, recklessly, when the abbot and legate were announced, the last word of his sentence being lost to the standers by.

'My lord of Lincoln, I believe you have spoken the truth,' ejaculated the bishop. 'I fear that even to the enemy of souls they would scarce deny the body and blood of our Lord if they could get gain by it.'

'I am glad to see, Robert Grosteste, that you have had grace to return to your proper obscurity,' said the legate, pointedly eyeing the bishop's plain black gown and cap.

The bishop was a little ruffled.

'I should be glad to see, Nicolo Pandulph,' said he, 'that *you* had grace to return to your proper stewardship—I mean to your own diocese in your own land, instead of staying here in a country which desires you not, draining the purses of the religious by shameful exactions, and acting as the engine of a pope who is anything but a pattern of goodness. I should be glad, more

especially, to see that you had grace to withdraw from the company of corrupt men;' he looked full at the abbot; 'men who are slayers, and not shepherds, of the sheep: men whom I will not see assuming before *me* those trappings for which they have sold their immortal interests, and every principle and sentiment that adorns a man.'

As he spoke he crossed the room, and left it without ceremony. The prince remained a listener to a curious conversation between the earl, the abbot, and the legate, which ended in the bulk of the earl's estates being made over to them. His sufferings had subsided, and he felt free of pain, but his frightfully swollen body, and the shocking discolourations of his face, too well evinced that this calm was only such as preceded an awful tempest.

Extreme unction was then administered. The ceremony had not concluded when the earl rolled off his bed in sudden agony, and belowered forth the most horrible imprecations. It was believed that he must expire in this fit. But Aaron, who was really possessed of considerable skill in medicine, had watched closely the symptoms of the disorder, and determined the nature of the poison taken; he now therefore compounded a powerful antidote, which proved at first successful beyond his hopes. The earl sank into a heavy sleep or stupor, in which state he remained for six hours. The legate and abbot left the fortress, the prince also retired, but Grosteste returned to the chamber and remained through the night in it, still hoping to arouse the earl to a sense of his guiltiness. Aaron carefully attended to his patient, and although his remedies appeared so successful, gave his opinion that the poison would still prove fatal to him.

'It is slow in its operation,' he whispered to the bishop, 'but it is certain death.'

Not ten minutes after he had said this the earl awoke in more than his former pangs, from which Aaron, as

before, relieved him. The earl then sinking again into a heavy sleep, asked the leech if he should get over it.

'My noble lord, without doubt you will,' was Aaron's ready reply. 'Why should my very good patron think otherwise?'

'I don't know why—not I. You have done me some good,' muttered the earl. 'I felt as if a thousand serpents were creeping about me and stinging me all over. Now I am better again. But if I have any more of these fits—I don't know—but I think I might die.'

'No—no, my good lord, you will not die for a score of years to come. You may have another fit or two and that will be all—nothing of consequence.'

The bishop did not hear this, or he would certainly have set the earl right as to his real state. Early in the morning the latter fell into a sort of waking trance. An unaccountable horror seized his faculties—a trembling came upon his limbs—and a deathlike torpor, with cold, charnel dews, crept over his breast and head.

The torments which he had inflicted on his unhappy prisoners were remembered with strange dismay; their shrieks penetrated his soul—their implorings were maddening. All his crimes arose before him.

He opened his eyes—the room was shrouded in darkness, only a few gleams of moonlight shone across the floor and bed from the slit in the wall. He tried to call to the leech, but could not. He would have given anything to hear him speak. He glanced, or thought he glanced, around the apartment from side to side, but could not see him. He supposed that Aaron had left him, and that he was alone.

The figure of his late countess now seemed to flit like a meagre shadow about his couch, and with her pale looks and sad eyes reproached him for his cruelty to her. At length he found utterance and cried—

'In the name of the Lord Christ, why do you trouble me, Anna?'

The shadow fluttered from side to side, about, and over the bed, so that he could not get one fixed look at her after he had spoken, but presently, at a little distance from the foot, it tremulously paused in a beam of moonshine, threw up the faint outline of its arms, with the hands clasped, and, shaking its head mournfully, swept, with the motion of an angel, brightening into more distinctness as it went, to the head of the bed, over the silken canopy, where it fluttered an instant with an angry look and then vanished.

After this, several of the earl's boon companions, dead long before, appeared sitting before the image of St. Denis, as mere skeletons, in white, tattered shrouds, drinking with each other as in former days, and boasting of their bad deeds. Their laughter was as boisterous and unmeaning as ever—yet it had a strange hollow sound—their jokes were as coarse, and their oaths as abundant. They raised their cups in the air, and then all at one moment, turning their fleshless countenances toward the bed, invited him to carouse with them.

Nothing so fearful had ever before crossed the imagination of the earl; his teeth chattered, and his hair stood on an end.

First one and then another of these spectres arose and approached him with their cups, as if determined to compel him to join their ghastly revelry. Their bony hands were thrust close to his face, and both they and the liquor they proffered smelled horribly of the churchyard.

'In the name of the Lord, go! For the sake of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity, stand off! I will not drink—I will have nothing to do with you!' thus panted the earl.

In a moment the shapes vanished, but as quickly reappeared at the back part of the room. There, in the murky gloom, they seemed to contend with each other. The horrific sounds were such as if they were rending one another in sunder.

Then they were outside the slit in the wall shrieking and moaning dismally. Those shrieks and moans gradually became more blended, and finally died off in the distance, as though the phantoms were passing slowly away to some region of blackness and despair.

'Am I on earth, or where?' faltered the earl, springing from his recumbent position.

'What is the matter, my very good patron?' cried the little servile Israelite, coming from behind the curtain, where he had been enjoying a slight nap.

'Hast heard them?—hast seen them?' exclaimed the earl, griping Aaron's shoulder, and drawing him closer to him.

'Heard who?—seen who, my lord?' returned the leech, terrified.

'Those drinking ghosts, and my countess,' replied the baron, his eye fearfully rolling around the chamber; 'they were here just now. You must have been stone blind not to have seen them.'

'Here, my lord? no—surely,' responded Aaron, and his knees began to knock together; 'the countess, you know, my lord, is dead and buried.'

'I know it, fellow; yet she stood there—not a yard off the foot of this bed—a few minutes ago.'

'Shall I call the bishop, my good lord?' cried the pale leech, now seriously frightened; 'he is in the little closet in the gallery, reading in the book that he brought with him; he bade me call him if you awoke.'

'And has *he* stayed with me—and only *he*?' ejaculated the earl, musing. 'Grosteste is a good man; yes—let him come—perhaps he can tell me why these ghosts have troubled me.' The earl's manner was much milder, and more depressed, than usual.

Aaron lit a taper which stood by the image of St. Denis, and took that which had been burning on a table with him to the closet. As he was going out of the chamber, the earl would have recalled him, not liking to be left alone, but the leech

was too terrified to be willing to hear his indeterminate call, and passed out with steps quickened by fear.

The newly-lit taper burnt very faintly, and its few trembling rays, instead of dissipating the darkness, only served to make it more apparent. The earl's eye turned to the slit in the wall, in hopes to see the light of morning entering, but as yet there was no indication of it, and what moonbeams had found admission they were now withdrawn.

'Nero! Carlo! Lion!' cried he to the dogs, wishful to awaken some stir of life about him. His usually rough voice was weakened so much that they hardly recognised it, and an angry growl from an awakened wolf-hound, and a deep bark from a mastiff, were the only responses, but even these were welcome.

'Hither, Lion, hither!' he cried. The noble mastiff arose from the leopard's skin, shook itself, and stalked with dignified mein to its master's knee. The earl would have patted his large sides, but found that his extremities refused their natural motion—the joints of his hands and feet were stiff and dead. This discovery first gave him the idea that his death was near. Directly after he perceived that the fatal numbness was extending itself up his arms and legs.

'Where does the leech stop, I wonder?' he stammered, sinking upon his side on the bed, for he was no longer capable of supporting himself erect. 'Why is the knave so long?—Why has he left me here alone?—What aileth thee, Lion, ha?'

The mastiff shrank close to the side of the bed, exhibiting considerable uneasiness, at the same time the wolf-hound, beside which it had been lying, gave vent to a startling howl. Almost instantaneously the earl sank again into his former mysterious sleep or trance, and in that state saw his grandson enter the chamber instead of the leech and bishop whom he expected.

'Boy Gervase, I am glad to see thee on thy feet again,' murmured the earl. 'It is many a long day

since thou wert off thy bed. But how is this—thy lameness is gone, and thou walkest firm and strong.'

'I am well enough now, grandfather,' said Gervase; and his tones were so wonderfully musical that the earl looked at him as he thought, more closely. Few traces of his sickly, emaciated, crippled grandson, were there in the bright figure before him.

'How long have you been like this?' inquired the amazed earl.

'Only one half-hour,' was the distinct answer of the smiling boy; 'and if you will harken to the bishop you will be as well as I am by this time to-morrow night; and if not—' his countenance all at once changed into that of the countess, whose reproachful features were hovering before the earl in a dim mist, when total insensibility shut them, and every other phantom from his dissolving senses.

When the bishop entered, he found the earl lying stiff and apparently dead. Aaron, who willingly found an excuse for remaining out of the room, had stayed behind to compound his physics, but, being summoned, declared that his patient was dying.

The esquire of the body to the earl came into the room at break of day, and whispered to the bishop. The earl suddenly started up and said, abruptly—

'Sirrah 'squire, speak out aloud. You come with tidings of my grandson's health; how does he;—is he better than he was yesterday?'

'My lord, Sir Gervase died in his sleep an hour and a half ago,' said the esquire.

'I know that is true—for I have seen him,' said the earl, falling heavily on the bed. 'Go out of the room,' addressing Aaron and the esquire, 'leave me with the bishop. I must talk with him, for I myself shall die to-day.'

The esquire and the leech accordingly went out, and, joining the expectant household outside, went down with them to breakfast in the hall. The seneschal was at the head

of the board, in his silk camlet gown of office; the warders of the garrison, and of the great tower, sat by him, and below were ranged in due order of precedence, the warders of the lesser towers of the fortress, the earl's henchmen, the knights of the household, and others.

The table groaned beneath piles of beef, and pitchers of wine, and to this substantial cheer no one failed to do ample justice. That the earl had seen the spirits of his lady and his grandson during the night, was Aaron's theme, not forgetting the extreme caution he had been compelled to use in moving about the chamber on account of the dogs, the most dangerous of them having only been fastened by leashes, and he found willing listeners all round the table. The dying condition of a man such as the earl had been, was not likely to call forth sadness on the countenance of any of his licentious adherents, nor did it do so; but the most hardened of them were susceptible of supernatural terrors, and as they all ate and drank they talked about nothing else but the earl's visions. They knew no more of these than the leech and the esquire had gathered from the earl's own lips, but when facts failed to be exciting enough to give zest to the conversation, exaggeration was called in. Aaron freely embellished what he had to impart without fear of detection, for he knew that no one could contradict him. That two apparitions should be talked of was not sufficient for him; he gave mysterious hints of marvellous sights that he himself had seen, and of doleful sounds that he had heard. Every thing he said was greedily swallowed by the household, the substance of it being shortly spread abroad among the soldiers of the garrison, and among the townspeople, increasing in quantity, like a rolling snow-ball, as it advanced.

The following day the mourning flag of the house of Lincoln opened its sable folds to the breeze on the embattled summit of the keep, and shortly after the mortal remains of

the earl and his grandson lay side by side in the principal state chamber. The fortress was immediately taken possession of by the abbot, who, in his character of justice-itinerant, held it for the king, until his highness should ratify the claims of the legate and himself upon the earl's estates, and determine who should be the possessor of the residue.

It was soon reported that the king proposed to attend the double funeral of the baron and his grandson, and that the chief justiciary of England, and the high-sheriff of the county, were coming with him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHEN Lord Hugh came into the presence of Lady Isabella, he found her surrounded by her maidens, who were engaged in tapestry work for the cathedral. She immediately dismissed them, and they went to their evening devotions in the chapel room of their excellent mistress, before retiring, each to her quiet pillow, for the night.

The lady then asked the crusader if he knew the hermit of the swan-pools. The knight at first replied in the negative, but then corrected himself, and said that he would not do his heart so much injustice as to disclaim a knowledge of him—he did know him—though he had not seen him; he knew him as one to whom he owed much return for the kindness that he had shown to his child.

'My poor little Hugh spoke of the good man,' said the knight, 'during my first and only meeting with him since my return from the Holy Land. I asked him who took care of him. He innocently answered 'the hermit and the pretty Jewish lady, but that he lived in the priory of Icanno, and should be glad when he went away from there.'

Lady Isabella begged him to repeat the words which the child had used, when the knight had done so, she inquired if they did not exactly harmonise with the description Gesta had given of the kind and tender treatment which Sir Hugh had always received in the house of Jocenus.

'They do indeed!' said the crusader; 'and, moreover, they agree, as doth also the statement of this young man you have named, with what I have learnt from the merchant's own lips. I have seen Jocenus, worthy lady, and I have had evidence upon evidence to satisfy me that he and his daughter have been wrongfully accused.'

'I have promised you, Lord Hugh,' said Lady Isabella, 'and I will fulfil my promise to the letter, to bring you certain proofs of that when the sheriff arrives in our city. But now I have made bold to send for you, my Lord Hugh, on this account:—The reverend hermit we have been talking of has been with me to-day, to inform me that he has spoken with one of the handmaids of the merchant's daughter, a damsel who was carried with her mistress from the dungeon of the castle.'

'Your pardon for my rudeness, worthy lady, but permit me to say, I myself have seen this damsel, and have heard her sad story.'

'I am glad that you have,' said the lady; 'you know then that the plundered Jewish heiress has been carried away privily by the abbot's knights, and that the place of her imprisonment is concealed from the friends of justice.'

'I heard the damsel say that fair Judith had been removed from the Boar's Den,' replied Lord Hugh; 'but I understood that it was the prince who had removed her.'

'No—it was the abbot,' returned Lady Isabella, with kindling colour, 'he will not be satisfied without the immolation of that unfortunate father and daughter. But I have kept my eye upon his most secret movements, and I will ruin his plans, though they were ever so artfully laid. At daybreak, my noble lord, I know that he intends to set out upon an important journey, which has no other object in view than the death of the merchant's daughter. The hermit will follow him, and I shall entrust to his hands a writing, by which I hope to prevent that which the abbot goes to accomplish.

But it would be well, my lord, to send, if it were possible, the father of the Hebrew lady, or others of her friends, with the hermit; he is aged, and may be impeded in his important mission by natural infirmities. I believe you think it your duty, my Lord Hugh, to endeavour to preserve her. Will you—can you—undertake to find Jocenus, or any other person who is prudent and zealous on her behalf, to keep the hermit company.'

The martial face of the crusader expressed undisguised pleasure.

'Honoured lady,' said he, 'to whose hands can you better entrust such a task than to mine? It was through her father's regard for me, and for my poor desolate boy, that she has been placed in her present peril. I will let none, willingly, be the means of saving her except myself, who was the means of putting her in jeopardy.'

'I applaud your determination, noble knight,' said the lady, evidently relieved from a difficulty. 'Here then is a copy of an order from the king, withdrawing the power of justice-itinerant from the abbot, and commanding that the execution of Judith, the Jewess heiress, be deferred until she have been examined before himself and his court. To you, my Lord de Gant, I give this in trust, on the faith of your honourable word that you will, with your best ability, use it for the preservation of the Hebrew lady.'

'I do so receive it, Lady Isabella, and by this sacred symbol, that honourable word of mine, I will most faithfully redeem!' said the knight, raising to his lips the cruciform hilt of his sword.

'I have written to his highness, King Henry,' said the lady, 'and I deem myself fortunate in having received a favourable reply in time to be of service to the oppressed. Several times I have made appeals in other quarters, which have proved fruitless; then resolved, if possible, not to be baffled, I applied to the fountain head of power, and corrupted as it is in the whole, yet, in this

case, it has yielded to the poor element of justice.'

'Have you any knowledge, Lady Isabella, of the abbot's intended route, and of the probable length of his journey?' inquired the knight, after a silent consultation with his thoughts.

'None at all, my lord,' was the reply; 'I only know that he sets out at the beginning of the coming day, and that he is going upon no other errand than to see his sentence on the merchant's daughter executed. You must keep him in sight, noble lord of Gant, until you reach the scene where her tragedy, according to his intention, is to be wound up.'

'Fear me not—I will not lose his track.'

'But whatever you do, for your own sake, my lord,' said the lady, with earnestness, 'do not be seen by any of his train, much less by himself, and do not appear in person as a friend of the Jewess. Though you bear the chief hazard and fatigue in rescuing her, yet, when that rescue is certain, let another hand than yours be seen to effect it.'

'I respect your advice, Lady Isabella, and I will religiously abide by it. You shall shortly hear from me.'

'And you must not fail to return immediately after your errand is done, my noble lord,' said the lady. 'The unveiling of the abbot cannot take place without you are present. It would be well if you were to send a messenger to me, as soon as you reach the place where the merchant's daughter is, informing me where I may address a letter to you, in case the sheriff arrives, and in case the hour for opening the seals of the mystery be hastened.'

'I will do so, Lady Isabella, and you shall know what fortune I have met with on the way, and how I am likely to succeed. I shall not, by your leave, inform Jocenus of the matter in hand, though I know where he is, and can gain ready access to him; his mind is nearly wrecked; he had better remain out of the way of harm, until some cer-

tain prospect of better days can be presented to his view.'

'There is one person who should be with you,' said the lady; 'his singular devotedness to the merchant and his daughter, and his former connection with them, rendering him a fit ally.'

'You mean Gesta,' said the knight.

'The same.'

'I was thinking of him,' remarked the crusader. 'He has interested me not a little, lady. His miserable mother, Myrza, died wretchedly in the prison where she was, and the unfeeling dastards of the gaol would have maltreated her body had I not kept them at bay with this weapon I hold, while her son carried it away. He was shamefully used, too; I found him hanging from a gallows in the sight of the abbot, and cut him down only just in time to save his life. I myself, I believe, was in no small danger in that horrible place. You do not know, perhaps, that he is a natural son of the earl of Lincoln.'

'Of the earl! do I hear you rightly?' cried the lady; 'are you not deceived, my lord?'

'I believe it as firmly as that I was born a Gant of Lancaster,' said the knight; 'and sincerely do I hope that if the earl dies with the poison he has taken, Gesta may be allowed by the king, some part of his enormous estates.'

'Indeed, I hope so too!' ejaculated the lady. 'But you spoke of the earl having taken poison — what mean you, sir knight?'

'Have you not heard the cry with which all the city is ringing, lady? Richard of Bargate has poisoned the earl of Lincoln. This is proclaimed by the populace from street to street.'

'I thought that my brother went to the castle in unusual haste,' said the lady; 'and I heard a great bustle abroad, but gave little heed to it, supposing some sport about to be practised. The bishop has more than once warned the earl, but I am sorry to find it has been to no purpose.

Heaven pardon him! The thief on the cross met with mercy, perhaps he may also. I was with his lame grandson this morning. Sir Gervase lives longer than I had anticipated, but he must shortly sink beneath the decay that is consuming him; then the earl has not a natural heir left, unless this Gesta be considered one. The parents of Sir Gervase both died, the one within a month prior to his birth, the other a month after.'

'I shall immediately make search for Gesta,' said the knight, bracing himself for his undertaking, 'and I have no doubt that I shall soon find him — then a few hasty preparations will suffice for my journey. But where may I meet with the hermit, Lady Isabella?'

'He shall be at the Fairy-oaks, by the road south of the city which runs toward London, to-morrow morning an hour before the curfew bell rings.'

'At that time I will join him,' said the knight. 'Peace be with you, worthy and humane lady! You shall hear from me as I said.'

'Heaven speed you in defence of the injured,' responded the lady, and the knight took his leave.

Lord Hugh hastened to the castle, and soon learned from the retainers attached to the household, who were hanging about the keep talking loudly to each other, that Gesta had been ordered into confinement, but that the bishop had interfered for him, and his imprisonment was merely nominal.

Lord Hugh then sent a few lines to Lady Isabella begging her to obtain, through the bishop her brother, the immediate liberation of Gesta. Lady Isabella instantly sent her own trusty page to Grosteste with a confidential message. Lord Hugh afterwards received a reply from her to the effect that the bishop intended to remain all the night in the castle, and would exert himself to do as his sister wished when a favourable opportunity occurred, but at present he could not interfere for Gesta more than to secure his

personal safety. At the same time she strenuously advised Lord Hugh to be at the Fairy-oaks at the hour determined upon, and if he did not find Gesta there, as well as the hermit, to depart, if necessary, without him.

In the morning there was a thin, drizzling rain, and a cold wind; the sky appeared lowering, of a dull, unvarying grey, and nature prematurely assumed a wintry aspect. But the heart of the chivalrous knight was wound up for his honourable enterprise, and the cheerlessness of the weather could not damp its lively pulses.

Travelling in those days involved a variety of perils, for which the knight had prepared himself. He rode the gallant steed which had so often borne him in the dread shock of battle against the Paynim host, and was attended by his esquire. His plated chain armour, his white silk surcoat, or short frock, worn loosely over it, embroidered with a scarlet cross, evinced that he was a crusader; while the portcullis-bars, wrought in gold, on the top of his embossed helmet, beneath the shade of a stately plume of snowy feathers, and upon the centre of his kite-shaped shield, evidenced his distinction in point of rank.

The esquire, in half armour, trotted his small horse after the knight through Wykenford, until the commencement of the London road. Lord Hugh then walked his horse along for a distance of a hundred paces, and the esquire necessarily did the same. Then the knight stopped and looked about him, and the esquire did so too, and with no slight curiosity, being entirely ignorant of the nature of the errand they were going upon. He supposed they should attend some tournament, but if so, why had his lord kept so unusual a silence toward him regarding it, and why had he forbade him making certain preparations requisite for it?

While he was putting these questions to himself, the venerable figure of the hermit was perceived coming

up the hilly road from the city, on a sure-footed and hardy palfrey, which the knight had seen in the private stables of the Lady Isabella.

Lord Hugh and his esquire planted themselves by the road-side, under the twisted branches of two great oak-trees, which had obtained the name of the Fairy Oaks, it being supposed that fairies played their gambols about them whenever the moon was full.

'Benedicite, my son,' said the hermit, rather tremulously, to the foremost and principal rider, as he was passing these trees. The knight looked intently at him; he could not in the least recognise the figure, but he thought that the voice was familiar to him.

'Save you, holy father,' he responded, bending his plumed head in reverence.

'You are from the Holy Land?' said the hermit, inquiringly, stopping and glancing at the cross which was upon the streamer of his lance and his surcoat.

'Yes, good father,' answered the knight, with a little exultation in his tone. 'I have shivered more than one good sword for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels.'

'Yet you would see justice done even to an infidel, would you not?' asked the hermit, in a lower voice, at the same time looking on each side as if fearful of being overheard.

'Truly, for that end I set out from Lincoln this morning,' replied the knight.

'Our purpose is the same then,' said the hermit; 'but if my weak eyesight does not deceive me, that is an esquire you have with you, and not master Gesta, and we have yet to tarry for him.'

'I shall only wait for the appearance of the hawk which will presently wing its threatening course past here,' said the knight, alluding to the abbot; 'and you had better ride near or with my esquire, father, that I may protect you on the way that lies before us.'

'I will do as you say,' said the hermit, riding nearer to the person

named, and as he did so, pulling his hood over his face, either on account of the coldness of the wind, or for the purpose of concealing his features.

The three remained nearly stationary under the Fairy Oaks until the middle of the forenoon, and still no sign of the abbot appeared. The knight now became uneasy lest the Lady Isabella had mistaken the south for the north road, or lest he had misunderstood her directions.

'Yet I fancied she distinctly named the Fairy Oaks,' said he to the hermit, 'and it is hardly likely that both you and I should have come to this precise spot, if she had not fixed upon it as our place of meeting.'

'Have patience a little longer, my son,' said the hermit, 'I know we are right.'

'Then it may be that the Lady Isabella erred as to the time of the abbot's setting out.'

'No,' said the hermit, 'she did not err, but something unforeseen must have occurred to detain him.'

Another hour went by, and an extremely tedious one it was. The knight then rode into Wykenford, and cast his eye up the long suburb to see if the abbot was approaching. Glad was he when he caught sight of the banners of four lancemen of Crowland coming into view at the end of the street—at the same moment the mournful death-bell of the minster thrilled him with its deep sounds. He directly turned his horse, and spurred back to the two oaks, where he had left the hermit and his esquire.

'Onwards! the hawk sweeps hitherward!' were his brief but emphatic exclamations, and the three proceeded at a gentle pace forwards along the road. 'The earl of Lincoln must be dead,' said the knight, falling back to the side of the hermit; 'did you not hear the great bell of St. Mary's toll?'

'Yes, my son,' replied the father, closing his eyes a moment in mental prayer, and dropping a bead of his rosary, 'as the wind came this way I heard the knell—it had a very sweet

and melancholy tone, lingering long on my ear, and dying off like a sad and mellow music. It was for the earl, I dare say. Peace and pardon go with him to the tomb though he has lived so ill.'

'I have few good wishes to spare for such a man; he was the chief abettor of the abbot, until the legate was taken into the ambitious priest's confidence instead of him,' cried the knight. 'But let us see at what speed those behind us are advancing.'

He turned in his saddle, and looked down the narrow and hilly road. The abbot's train was at no great distance, and the bells attached to the bridles of their horses were beginning to be faintly heard. They were coming on now at a steady canter, and the knight, having remained motionless until they had nearly reached the foot of a hill, on the top of which he was, again set forward at the same speed. The sound of their bells proved of considerable assistance to him; according to the degree of loudness of the jingling silver he regulated his advance, and thus he was able, with the utmost ease, to keep an equal distance from the party behind, and to be sure that he had not lost them.

The hour of noon arrived, and the travellers were crossing those marshes in which the Boar's Den stood. The hermit, who was following a little in the rear of the esquire, galloped up to the knight, and stretching out his arm, pointed across a fen (the same in which Keturah and Gower perished), telling him what building it was which appeared alone on the level in the distance.

The knight could not avoid remarking how admirably well the hermit bore the exercise of riding; occasionally he perceived that his figure lost its remarkable stoop, and that his eye was more lively and bright, and his gestures more animated, than his apparent age would warrant; there were times, too, when the fancy that he had heard the hermit's voice before under peculiar circumstances, took complete possession of him, and he tried in vain to recol-

lect when or where he had met with him in times past. He could not account for the impressions he had, but they haunted him all through the journey. He frequently caught himself looking at the good father with an intenseness that must have been quite embarrassing to him ; and whenever the latter spoke, whether to himself or his attendant, he found that he could not avoid listening with the strongest interest.

The esquire now began to reckon how many hours had elapsed since he breakfasted, and to wonder when, and at what place they were to dine.

The whole country was one wide plain of clay, and mire, and water. The infirm road they were upon yielded to every step of the horses' hoofs, and the thin mud splashed up in the faces of the riders in not the pleasantest way in the world.

At length there came in sight a small convent. The esquire fervently hoped that they were to stop here, and fastened an earnest look on the conspicuous crosses which were raised on the peaked ends of the roof. Coming nearer to it, he saw the smoke of the chimneys, and the poor peasants of the fens gathering about the simple portal, waiting for the bread and ale which was daily distributed to them there at this hour.

The knight rode nearly up to the convent, which stood a little off the line of the direct road, then turned aside as if to cross the plain on a bye path. This greatly disappointed the hungry 'squire, and he muttered grievous things against his master.

But the knight himself felt the cravings of nature, and he only waited until the bells behind ceased their tuneful clamour, before he turned back to the convent. The abbot and his retinue had entered there with the intention of putting the hospitality of the community to the test ; and the knight did the same, only taking the precaution of lowering his visor over his face, and sending his willing attendant before him with instructions what to say.

The latter craved entertainment for his master as a knight of Pales-

tine, on an enterprise that required he should mix with no company. The door of the pilgrim's lodge was immediately opened, and a free welcome given. A little parlour received the knight, the hermit, and the esquire, where a frugal, but wholesome repast, of mutton and capons, with ale and wine, was quickly served up. The esquire waited upon his master and the father at table and afterwards regaled himself to his heart's content.

The bells soon rang again in front of the convent, and the knight, receiving the sound as his signal, arose, and prepared to follow the abbot, having made the superior a liberal present to be employed for use of the convent, and for the poor of the district. He departed with the blessings of the needy but generous brethren.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT nightfall the abbot was entertained by a brotherhood of black friars, in a small town, and close by, the knight also took up his quarters at a tavern. By daylight the latter was on the alert, and presently the horses and the bells of the abbot's train were in motion as on the preceding day. The knight had aroused his esquire and the hermit, who were now ready mounted in the tavern-court. As he stood looking out from the lattice-bars of the chamber he had lodged in, he beheld the almost regal procession of the abbot pass down the open street to the road, watched by many curious gazers from the roofs and lattices of the houses.

The abbot was attended by his chaplain of honour, who had been appointed to the office by the pope himself, through the medium of the legate ; a marshal, in rich robes, rode before, preceded by a band of abbey-knights and subordinate lance men ; the prior of Crowland, and four state officers, followed and after them the rest of the guard.

As soon as they were at a moderate distance, the knight discharged the reckoning for himself and the

two with him, then spurred after the abbot's party so as to keep it in view.

The scene was now changed to a vast heath, with wild, and woody ridges, under whose hanging sides the road wound to a forest. In these forest shades, which made a twilight even at noon, the knight threaded his way among a number of dim paths, guided only by the noise of the bells before him. He had lost sight of the abbot's party owing to the windings of the way, and he was not a little perplexed and annoyed when he came to a spot where no less than four paths presented themselves for his choice, to hear in different directions the sounds by which he was guided. He stopped, and consulted with the hermit, neither could he determine which set of bells was the right one. In both cases there seemed to be many of them, and the ringing was equally clear and musical.

Chance determined it, one set of these bells were suddenly silent and as the knight knew no reason why the abbot's party should make a stop in the wood, he judged that if he followed those which continued to play, he should be correct, accordingly he proceeded after the latter.

The branches so overhung the path, that the knight was compelled to dismount and lead his horse, as did also the hermit and the esquire, thus some time was lost, and the bells were only heard indistinctly. It was not until Lord Hugh began to emerge from the wood that he was able to see those persons whom he was following. His vexation may be conceived, instead of the abbot and his train they were gentlemen and ladies with hawks on their wrists, and falconers bearing the furniture required for the sport of hawking. Scarcely had he noticed them, when a hunting horn sent a stirring blast through the very thickest part of the cover, and the loud voice of a forester was heard singing in rude, but enlivening strains—

'When woods are green,
And larks ascend
To heaven serene,

To the chase—to the chase! to the merry merry chase!

The burden was taken up by other jovial voices, and repeated in so rousing a style, that even at that mortifying moment the knight's heart could not but in some degree answer to the measure. The first voice began again—

'When the honied dew
Fills the lily's cup,
And morn is new,
Then up—then up

To the chase—to the chase! to the merry merry chase!

The knight had not patience to listen longer, but sent his steed bounding forwards, and soon left the wood at a distance behind him. His object was to gain a rising ground, that he might look for the abbot's party, but when this was done he could see no trace of it.

A smiling hamlet skirted the wood; meadows and pasture-land stretched abroad from it; wolds bounded the prospect on the right, and a river flowed on the left; the wood-lark sang in the sunny air, and the throstle in the beechen boughs which shaded the pleasant meadow-hillocks. But the knight heard nothing—saw nothing—of the abbot, and when the hermit and the esquire came up to him they found him bitterly upbraiding himself for his want of caution.

The abbot, at the end of this day's journey, crossed a river to a barren and almost uninhabited island, where there was one wealthy religious house, in which he passed the night. Early the next morning he crossed to a village by the sea, and from thence passed on to a town in which his presence was expected with a high degree of excitement.

The approaches were guarded by barriers, for some of the barons who lived near had made incursions into the town of the most injurious nature to the unfortunate inhabitants, and the people had risen and taken arms, determined to repel them, or forfeit their lives in the struggle.

Here was Judith confined, and

this was to be the last day of her life. She knew it—and let us see how she was employed. Her place of confinement resembled a condemned cell in one of our principal modern prisons, excepting that there were here a stone basin of holy-water, and a wooden crucifix fastened to the wall. At eight o'clock in the morning she was in the most tranquil of slumbers on her straw pallet, smiling in her dreams like a happy child. At nine o'clock she was arraying herself with as much precision as ever she had used in her life. She had not been deprived of that bundle of raiment, and that brass-wrought chest, which was all she had preserved from the wreck of her home, and now she chose out of the former a black velvet robe, and put it on. Her arms were bare, but over her magnificent tresses, and over her neck, she flung a large mourning veil.

It was not in the vain desire of exciting admiration of her beauty in the closing scene of her life which prompted her thus to array herself, but it was a modest dignity, a noble tenaciousness of what was due to her father and herself.

And thus she stood in that airless cell, her arms stretched downwards, and her slender fingers clasped—her dark eyes, wherein all her soul was gathered, thrown up to heaven in confidence and love. That wonderful forehead of hers, how it was burdened in its polished whiteness with intellect!—that enchanting mouth, what celestial sweetness played about it! If a painter or sculptor could have perpetuated on canvas or in stone the 'Jew's Daughter,' as she appeared in that sublime moment, he would have made himself immortal.

And now she takes into her hand a small harp, and deliberately tunes the strings, sitting down on a rude stone seat. Can she be calm enough to waken upon its chords her long forgotten minstrelsy? Does she not think of the fearful hour that is fast—fast approaching?

She *has* tuned the strings—she

does awaken her minstrelsy once more. Never did the walls which close her in echo to such strains as those she now revives. Her voice is certainly weaker, but who could say that it is not as rich and exquisite as ever? She sings Hebrew melodies—no other. Every one is solemn, and yet breathes of holy rapture, or a heavenly peace, while the soul of the singer is lifted up above the spheres.

Now that lovely head droops—the fingers cease their magic, and listlessly rest upon the wires. She weeps—the tears trickle silently down, faster and faster, and she heeds them not. The overcharged flower bends at last under its weight. What memories have stirred her deep spirit? Does she think of her father?—of her once blissful and beautiful home?—of those attached servants and friends who have perished or are in jeopardy for her? She thinks of them all. Nothing of the past is forgotten now. And there rises before her *one* image which wrings her heart indeed. It is that of Lord Hugh. The sharpness of her cruel fate was taken away when she knew that *he* believed the calumnies spread abroad against her. That was the deepest stab she had experienced or could experience.

Her streaming eyes are again lifted—again her harp is struck with sad lofty pathos, then laid aside. Now she prostrates herself in silence before the Jehovah of her ancient fathers.

At twelve o'clock she draws a roll of parchment from the chest, opens it and reads. It is a Greek manuscript of the New Testament. And as she reads she murmurs—

'If it be possible let this cup pass from me—nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.' 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' Here then lean my weak and timorous soul! Here on this golden anchor, fasten thy steadfast hand! and amid the horror of the tempest thou wilt be safe.'

That treasured relic of her mother, the letter which the hermit had given her, was then drawn from her bosom, perused, and returned to its concealment.

Lastly she writes letters to her father, Gesta, Belaset, Lord Hugh, and the Hebrews in general, and puts them in her chest, not without a secret fear that they will never reach the persons for whom they are intended.

She is ready now—ready for that mysterious change which even the wisest and best cannot anticipate without extreme awe. She sits down collectedly with the manuscript in her hand, waiting the summons of death. In the open leaves lies a thin and silky tress of golden hair, that had been shorn from the head of the child for whom she was about to suffer.

Once a slight faintness came over her, making her cheek more pale, but it passed away soon. She had tasted no food or drink since the afternoon of the day before, and there was not so much as a drop of water in her cell. She cheered herself, however, with the consideration that her sufferings would soon be over. While she waited thus, moments occurred when she longed for the instant of dissolution, painful as it might be, and she was ready to exclaim—‘O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?’

The hubbub of gathering crowds, and the rolling of cart wheels, at length gave her warning to gird up her soul for its last struggle. The carts stopped under the walls of her prison, and then there was a noise of great keys turning in the rusty locks, and of iron doors swinging back on groaning hinges. She stood up, having in one hand her manuscript, which she involuntarily held to her heart as if to quiet the startled pulses there, and in the other a small Persian case of amber, filled with aromatic essences, with which she sought to keep off the faintness that assailed her senses. Every minute she breathed some pious

ejaculation. As her cell was entered by the gaoler, and those who were to take her to the place of execution, she softly exclaimed—‘O Thou who art the life of the universe, preserve my soul!’ and with these words stepped firmly out between the men.

When she had crossed a dark passage that was guarded with soldiers, she was bade to enter a cart at the gate of the building, which she did with as much apparent cheerfulness as some would have in mounting a throne.

The chief executioner, who was the porter of the town, sat on his horse by the cart, to see her fastened down upon her seat. She addressed him with a smile, while his fellows were rudely drawing the cords around her arms.

‘Sir, it is usual, I believe, for you to receive the raiment of your criminals; I have left mine, together with my harp, for you and the gaoler—only I crave one favour from you.’

‘What may that be?’ he asked, controlled into respect by the touching sweetness of her manners.

‘There is a small packet in the chest which I would wish to be sent to the care of any honest Jew of this town.’ This packet contained the letters she had written.

‘I will give it to the high priest of your people—he is now lodging in the next lane to this,’ said the executioner.

Judith thanked him from her heart, and the procession moved on. The under-sheriff of the town rode in front of the cart, and the executioner followed it; around were a numerous body of civil officers and a guard of soldiers.

Several confined streets were traversed, and then a large open space at one end of the town came in view. There, a tall stake, encircled by a pile of wood, was seen in the midst of a multitude of people; near to the stake was a gallows. Judith looked steadily on these fearful preparations, and did not seem to quail.

At the corners of the last street

which the cart passed through, there was a gallows-house, as a public-house was named, from whose door-post swung the coarse representation of an execution; here the rude vehicle in which Judith was, made a stand, and the landlord brought a death-bowl for the criminal, according to custom. The drink was a half-pint of tolerable wine, of which Judith took a little, thanking the person who gave it her with gentleness.

The roar of the multitude was terrible to hear. Hootings and groans swelled to the clouds, and the trampling of the people shook the earth. The barbarous noises made in her ears appalled Judith more than the gallows or the stake. Yet she kept her heart steadfast on its immortal hopes, and bore all with unexampled patience. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' were the only words that escaped her lips.

In crossing slowly the open space toward the gallows she was assailed by vile language, and by still viler ill-usage. She was covered with mud, and bruised by stones—her veil was torn from her defenceless form—and before the guard could prevent, the cart was climbed by the mob, and she was torn out, and thrown upon the muddy ground. She had received many severe injuries before the authorities around could succeed in rescuing her from her savage tormentors, and was more dead than alive when the former placed her in another cart, and so conveyed her to the scaffold.

No sooner did she perceive where she was, than she arose to her feet, and looked steadfastly on those who had so grossly injured her, and at the halter, then threw herself on her knees in prayer. A priest put a crucifix in her hand, and exhorted her to abjure her damnable infidelity. She distinctly exclaimed—'I believe that God is just and good!'

Accordingly she joined in most of the priest's prayers with unhesitating piety, saying nothing of those parts of them to which she objected,

for the substance of religion was all she had time or inclination to attend to. When the mob saw her thus reverently kneeling before a Christian priest, they became hushed, and the conviction was soon spread among them that she had abjured her Jewish sentiments.

The abbot now appeared advancing from the street in the distance, his beautiful charger led by a richly-dressed page; the officers with him cleared the way for his progress toward the scaffold, in front of which he paused, and addressed the populace, hundreds of whom knelt about him.

He began with lauding their zeal toward holy mother church, and the catholic faith, in the lively hatred they manifested toward all those who professed or practised pestilential infidelities, heresies and witchcraft.

He then gave to them an account of Judith and her father, stating that she had some years before seduced the affections of a Christian knight of noble degree, by using arts to heighten her beauty, and make herself excellent in minstrelsy—that the earl of Lincoln, against whom she had exerted some of her unlawful charms, would have had her judged for witchcraft, had not the knight who had been allured by her, protected her. That afterwards this noble knight went to Palestine, and the Jewess, having been thereby discomfited in her practices upon him, inveigled his son into her house, and with horrible, and detestable cruelty, crucified him in derision of the Saviour's death; that since then he (the abbot) had seen the martyr in a vision, who had described to him the particulars of his martyrdom, and commissioned him to give absolution, and indulgences from the services and penances of holy mother church, to all who should assist in bringing his murderer, and especially this woman, Judith, to lawful punishment. The abbot further declared, that the performance of miracles of healing at the shrine of Sir Hugh was only delayed until Jocenus and his daughter had been put to death.

After this he read a list of crimes imputed to Judith, and the sentence that she was to be hung and burnt, concluding by exhorting all present to thank the Virgin Mary and the saints in paradise for having taken pity on the faithful people of holy church, and delivered into their hands the murderess, traitoress, blasphemous, infidel, and sorceress, before them.

'Honour to the pope!' shouted the people, 'honour to our holy mother church, and to the abbot of Crowland!'

All was now in readiness for the suspension of the lovely victim, and already she had closed her eyes and thoughts on this world. While yet on her knees, she seemed to pass the boundary which separated time from eternity; her senses faded, and her pulses ceased to beat. The executioner shook her, and called upon her to arise, but she heard him not.

A deformed figure, in a Jewish gaberdine, now forced a passage through the dense assemblage, uplifting in the air a square piece of parchment on which there appeared writing, and crying out, in a harsh, strained voice—

'From the king!—from the king! Respite!—respite! Make way in the king's name! I come with the king's authority! Make way!—make way!'

The abbot did not at first hear these cries, so entirely was he absorbed in the consummation of his dark and cruel policy. His eyes were fixed on the scaffold, when that deformed figure burst through the line of guards, and rushed up the steps, exclaiming—

'Release her!—in the king's name! Respite! respite!'

'Soh!' muttered the abbot, anger blazing in his eye, as it lighted on the hated Gesta; 'a new interruption from that quarter! My curse on him! I think I have been as mad as the earl of Lincoln in the case of the hostelry-keeper, to have suffered him to live so long. Lead on quickly, page, to the gallows steps.'

Judith was embraced by Gesta

with convulsive agony. 'Fiends! they have killed her already!' he cried, hanging over her, and gazing in her face, while he laid his hand on her heart to feel if it beat or not. 'She cannot be dead! I will not think so! And yet there was no motion in her heart, and I do not perceive that she breathes. Her hand and cheek are cold as the grave, and her face is paler than any living person's could be. I fear I have come too late! yet I will hope that when I have removed her from these fiends incarnate, she will recover!'

'Executioner, proceed with your duty!' sternly commanded the abbot, who was now close to the scaffold.

The executioner attempted to put the rope over the head of Judith, but Gesta repulsed him with such violence, that he staggered back and nearly fell. The abbot took instant advantage of this imprudent assault, and Judith would have been suspended in another second, had not Gesta laid her senseless form down on the planks, and arrested further proceedings by exhibiting the writing conspicuously, and reiterating at the top of his voice, the potent words—'In the king's name!—in the king's name!'

'This is some trick! He was leagued with her!' exclaimed the enraged abbot. 'Do your duty, executioner!'

'Lord abbot, it will be only right that we hear the king's message,' remonstrated the under-sheriff.

'Do you think that the king would have sent a message by *his* hand?' returned the abbot. 'Is his highness wont to choose such messengers? I say again, this is some trick! and I warn you, sir sheriff, that if you are a partner in it, you will be answerable to holy church for the mischief that will result. I am here armed with a spiritual and a civil power to see the ashes of this murderess, traitoress, and sorceress, scattered to the winds! Beware how you give countenance to the tricks of her associates, so as to foil my purpose!'

'I only ask, lord abbot, that the writing which he holds be examined ; to do less would be treating the king's name with contempt, and expose me to his highness' anger !'

'I will protect you from his anger, sheriff. Obey me, and his anger shall not harm you.

'Priest,' said Gesta, giving the writing to him whom he addressed, 'there is a copy of King Henry's letter to the sister of the bishop of Lincoln—read it aloud I conjure you, and help me to see justice done to this innocent lady.'

The priest, who had been much softened by the devout manners of Judith, went to the edge of the scaffold, and read aloud, as Gesta desired—

'Henry, king of England, to the Lady Isabella Grosteste, sister of our well beloved Christian father, the bishop of Lincoln.—You write to us on behalf of a Jewess who has been condemned by our present justice-itinerant in the county of Lincoln, the abbot of Crowland, for sundry enormous crimes, particularly for crucifying the son of a loyal christian knight ; and in reply, we certify to you, that it is our will and pleasure that the abbot of Crowland resign his office of justice-itinerant (which he has already held longer than our commission specified), and that the condemned Jewess be not executed until she have been examined by us in person when we come to our faithful city of Lincoln, as it is our intention shortly to do. And give you warrant and authority hereby to make this our command known to the abbot of Crowland, and to those secular authorities who have charge of the Jewess, that they quietly obey forthwith.'

'I do not think it genuine !' exclaimed the abbot, who had more than one reason for disliking the letter. 'The Jews are apt at forgeries. Let me see it, priest !' The latter handed it to the sheriff, who gave it to the abbot ; he glanced over it angrily, then reading it twice, threw it down under his horse's feet, where it was trampled in the mud.

'This is a trick !' cried he. 'People, I appeal to you ! will you not see the martyr avenged ?'

The populace were divided ; the majority feared to incur the hazard of offending the king, he who was at all times the absolute dispenser of

life, and death, and property ; the others were awed by the abbot, and threatened the executioner if he did not proceed.

'I must be hardy enough, my lord abbot, to tell you that you err,' said the sheriff ; 'the woman should be remanded until the letter be either confirmed or denied. Remove her back to her prison, guards !'

'Sheriff, she shall not be remanded !' returned the abbot, losing in that emergency his characteristic caution. 'I demand her instant death ! I came here appointed by the martyr to be the minister of his vengeance, and I will not be put off by a paltry imposition ! If there is not here another hand but mine to perform the secular office of the law upon her, by the martyred body of the young saint, my hand shall perform it !'

So saying, he threw himself from the roan charger, and went upon the scaffold.

This masterly movement of the accomplished hypocrite greatly excited the spectators, and the executioner, who between the sheriff and the abbot had not known how to act, commenced his dreadful task immediately, while Gesta was forcibly held back by the guards.

'You will repent this ! The king will not be slighted with impunity ! Some of you will lose your lives for this hour's work !' articulated the latter, hoarse with passion, and lost in the frenzy of his anguish. 'Abbot ! wretch !—murderer !—thief ! Would that I could show the blackness of your heart to your blind dupes here ! Would that I could blast you in their presence by making them see what you are. Robber ! I would give up a kingdom to expose you now and be believed ! Did you not murder the confessor of Lord Hugh ?—did you not rob his helpless child of his gold ?—have you not foully lied against Jocenus and me ?—and do you not know this angel to be as pure and innocent as you are vile and guilty ? But the hour will come when your destructive course will be stopped. You are

walking upon a mine, take only a few steps further, and your character will be blown to atoms. Yes, robber and murderer! I shall live to see you everywhere abhorred!' And breaking from the guards he sprang to Judith, around whose neck the fatal noose was drawn. Throwing himself upon his knees on the planks he strained her lifeless body to his bursting heart.

'Thank God, she still breathes not!' he ejaculated. 'She is dead—yes—quite dead! She will suffer no more. She has baffled her persecutors!'

The multitude again appeared disturbed in the direction of the public-house called the gallows-house, and the abbot, looking to ascertain the cause, saw the Lincoln hermit making his way on a palfrey through the lane which was opened for him, toward the scaffold. When he came nearer he elevated an open piece of writing similar to that which the abbot had destroyed, and, raising himself in his stirrups, called out to those on the scaffold—'Stop! I have a letter from the king!'

'What! Are there more of them?' muttered the abbot internally. 'Nay, then I have lost the day, and all that I can now do is to retreat well, like a skilful but vanquished general!'

As soon as the hermit came under the gallows he delivered the writing he held to the sheriff, who, this time, did not attempt to pass it to the abbot, not being at all pleased with his behaviour. However, he read it aloud, and the abbot's chagrin was hardly to be concealed when he found that the contents were precisely the same as those which he had pronounced a forgery.

'Lord abbot, have you any objection to *this* copy of his highness' letter to the Lady Grosteste?' inquired the sheriff, pointedly.

'It may be genuine—but I should be excused, I think, sir sheriff, if I say that I do not think it is so.'

'Your reverence may think, of course, as you please,' observed the sheriff, coolly; 'but until you

choose to bring open proofs that your thoughts are correct, I shall act according to these written instructions.'

'Do so—such is your duty, perhaps,' said the abbot, quitting with a good grace that overbearing authoritativeness which had been so offensive to the sheriff; then speaking louder, he added, 'these persons around will bear me witness that I have clearly made known the martyr's will, and that I have done all, which it was in my power to do, to see it carried into effect. I have failed—I wash my hands of the consequences, and implore the saint not to visit upon me a disobedience which I would have prevented.'

By this time the people had begun to quarrel seriously, some taking part with the sheriff, some with the abbot. The former assailed the scaffold and the stake, tearing up the planks and scattering the faggots abroad; the others, to retort, attacked the house of the sheriff, which was near the place of execution, and swore to demolish it unless the Jewess was instantly burnt. The soldiers of the sheriff, however, quickly put the latter to flight, and tranquillity was again partially restored, to the abbot's extreme mortification, who had hoped that, during the affray, Judith would have been torn in pieces, and reduced to a cinder.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JUDITH, or all that remained of her, was conveyed back to the cell from which she had been taken, while the discomfited abbot, who, in this failure of his plans, had taken his first step downwards from the height which he had reached by such unworthy means, retired to Crowland Abbey.

The hermit and Gesta were in the cell with Judith; they had laid her on the straw pallet, and one was sprinkling water over her face, while the other chafed her hands.

'Kind hermit, I fear your hopes are destitute of probability. She seems to be gone,' said Gesta, lifting

his mournful eyes to the father's face, hoping, in spite of what he said, that the latter would repeat the hopes he had expressed of her recovery.

'We shall soon see, my son,' observed the hermit. 'Raise her head—higher yet. That dash of water roused her, did it not?'

'No—hermit—no. Is there nothing else we can try?'

'If I had the garden of my hermitage here, I would soon gather some herbs that would restore her if anything would.'

'But you have *not* the garden here,' said Gesta, impatiently. 'Is there nothing at hand which would answer?'

'The herbs may be here, my son, though the garden is not. Next this prison there is a goodly display of medicinal plants and flowers, which I saw as I came by it to-day; I will go thither and ask the owners to let me look for the cordials I want.'

'Hasten then, good hermit, I implore you! or, even if she lives now, she may be dead before you return. Now I am alone with thee, Judith!' he ejaculated, when the hermit had closed the cell door after him. 'Now I may gaze on thee without restraint. O, Judith, my beloved!' He lifted her head from the straw to his misshapen chest, and kissed her stony lips, and cheek, and brow, with many a salt tear.

Her robe was plastered with mud on one side, and her left arm too was covered with the same, intermingled with spots of blood. Her forehead was bruised in two places, and her right hand was severely cut. Many were the execrations Gesta breathed against her enemies as he attempted to wipe away from her fair skin the stains which defaced it with her handkerchief. Hoping with his voice to rouse her from her deathlike stillness, he called on her name in passionate accents—but she was deaf to all he said. The blood and dirt which gathered on her lips he removed, and sought in vain to detect there the faintest respiration.

'No—no—no! She is dead! She is gone forever! She will revive no more!' he exclaimed in piercing tones, dropping her icy hand upon the straw, and bursting into tears. 'My God! to think such a fate should have been hers! *Hers!* the most exalted woman that ever saw the sun! But she was too pure and wise for these bad times! that has been the cause of her untimely end. And what am I now I have lost her friendship? a wretch—a miserable wretch! If I have ever tasted one gleam of happiness upon this vile earth, it has been Judith who shed it upon me. Her kindness looked beyond this hideous shell in which my soul is incarcerated, and held communion with that soul, illuminating that dreadful obscurity, alleviating its most acute and secret pangs, and elevating it to comprehend the heights and depths of excellence. Angel! wilt thou indeed no more bless me with thy sweet eloquence, and still sweeter looks of tenderness. Must I carry about the earth, henceforth, my dismal load of mortality without sympathy? Strike me heaven with thy bolts of death at once! that I may stretch myself in eternal sleep beside her, and so escape such a doom! But complaining will not awaken her. Let me be hushed and endure. Your father, Judith, for him I must live awhile—but when he needs me not, I will speedily come after thee. I bury my misery in my withered heart until then, and until he who has brought thee into this condition, that devil, the abbot, shall have suffered in part the penalty of his demoniacal plottings.

The hermit returned with a few sprigs of a plant that had very peculiarly-shaped leaves, and proceeded to bruise them on a platter.

'I have found just that herb which I wanted most,' said he; 'and now if anything can bring her about it will be this.'

'It is too late, hermit.'

'I hope not, my son. This plant stimulates very powerfully; the root is excellent for the stomach at

all times, if chewed slowly in the mouth, and the leaves are very efficacious in cases of swooning, when administered with prayers to our lady. It is the juice of which I am going to give this poor injured maiden, and as she has partly embraced the true faith, I have no doubt that the Virgin will allow her influence to rest upon the physic. Here, my son, take this spoonful and pour it down her throat.'

'The liquid returns and flows from her mouth, hermit—see, it will not pass farther than her tongue.'

'That is a bad sign indeed. But I have still another remedy to try. These bruised leaves smell very powerfully—hold them under her nose, they may move the brain.'

Some time was spent in making this experiment, which answered no better than the preceding one.

'Keep her lips moist with the juice,' said the hermit, who now had his finger on her wrist. 'I perceive some slight movements of the pulse.'

'Are you sure?' demanded Gesta, a sudden flush of exquisite joy tinging his cadaverous cheek. 'Are you certain?'

'Not quite certain, my son. It is still now—quite still. I may have been deceived. There again was a feeble beat—but I can perceive no more—the pulse has gone again.'

'But it may again return—give me the juice, hermit, I will try it now. If there is any life at all left in her our care will restore her.'

'Your hand trembles, my son—you had better let me take the spoon. There—she swallowed that.'

'Did she!—you put me in an ecstasy! Persevere, hermit! I would be your slave for a century if you could only bring her back to life!'

'She is dear to you then?'

'Dear, old man! Yes, she is as dear to me as the light of day to a captive! as dear as health to the sick, or ease to the weary, or peace of mind to those in trouble! I would bear the worst torments that malice could inflict upon me, to bring the least comfort to her breast! I love

her, hermit!—do you understand that word?'

'The hermit's eyes were moist as he replied—'Who that has passed the days of youth does not understand it? Though I have been vowed to perpetual celibacy, my son, I have known the throbbings of earthly passion—and I can feel for you. In me, the yearnings of the human heart have been forcibly denied—it was my sacred duty to overcome them—but you have had no such necessity. Why then have you not sought the maid in marriage?'

'Good hermit! am I such an one as should be approved for the husband of this peerless creature? The world would have ridiculed her for such a choice—and I should have been the butt of all her friends.'

'If, my son, the maiden could discern merits beneath a poor exterior, and had mind enough to think for herself, I do not see why she should not have made you happy.'

'She has valued me as a favourite brother, and has behaved to me as a friend, hermit—more, I must have been presumptuous indeed if I had sought from her. No, my love should have consumed me ere I had asked her hand, and even if she herself had offered it to me I would not have accepted it.'

The hermit smiled, but made no remark; going out for a light, he met Lord Hugh in the passage.

'Will the fair Judith see me, do you think, reverend father?' he asked.

'I believe that she hath departed this life,' said the hermit. 'I reached the scaffold almost too late to be of any service to her; had not master Gesta been there before me, I feel convinced she would have been executed; and, as it is, she lies without motion, without breath, as far as I can perceive, and without pulse. But you can enter to her—yonder is the door; the gaoler who stands beside it will permit you to pass I should suppose.'

'He must—I have had leave from the sheriff, father. But is no one with her now.'

'Master Gesta, knightly son; and poor young man, he is sad enough, I assure you. My heart has ached to see his distress.'

'Is he indeed so attached to her? But so it should be—they have been betrothed I have understood.'

'I think not,' remarked the hermit, 'he seems to have thought too meanly of himself ever to have procured a requital of affection. Yet, saving his person, which, to be sure, is not the most pleasing one could select, and saving his gloomy air, I think him very well fitted to win a fair maiden's love. He has the art of discourse, and that is the main thing. Never heard I one who could talk in a way more likely to captivate the heart of a lady-love than he. But I must hasten for that which I came to seek—a torch or a lamp. I hope you may find her recovering.'

The knight entered the cell with many opposing feelings. Stopping a few minutes in the passage had accustomed his eyes to prison twilight, and he was able to discern dimly the exquisitely graceful outline of Judith's form stretched on the straw, and the impassioned and despairing Gesta, half sitting, half kneeling, supporting her head and shoulders. The waning light of afternoon, fell concentrated in sickly streaks on her black velvet robe, from the guard-chamber above, between which and this cell there was an iron grating in the ceiling of the latter.

Gesta raised his eyes to the mailed and crested figure before him.

'My lord of Gant,' cried he, with bitterness, 'you were but tardy in executing the Lady Isabella's request. Had I not reached this town before you, though I set out at least six hours after you, there would have not been left now one trace on earth of her whom we both professed to be anxious to save.'

'You have a show of reason for reproaching me,' said the knight, much affected by the touching spectacle before him, 'but none in reality. I lost the abbot's party in a

district to which I was a stranger, and had much difficulty in finding his track hitherward.'

'Unfortunate! for you found the executioner would not wait for you.'

'Young man, your insinuations would rouse my ire under any other than the present circumstances. But I understand your feelings, and pass over the offence. The hermit has explained her condition to me—he fears she has ceased to live—but I trust he is mistaken.'

'Why should *he* fear it, or *you*, my lord? She was no more to either of you than a fair flower by a wild hedge. You could both live and enjoy the world without her. Her father and I only have reason to fear she is dead! for if it be so indeed, we have nothing more left to love—but are as two sole survivors of a plague which has swept away all our hearts valued, or as two shipwrecked mariners on a desert island, who have no hope but in death.'

'I was not wrong then in supposing that you loved her,' said the knight, in a low, uneasy tone.

'No;—you supposed rightly!' exclaimed Gesta, whose long reserve upon the subject of his passion had now all melted away, and who suddenly took a wild pleasure in spreading out to the view of those who came near him, the riches of his hoarded feelings. 'I care not now who knows it. She was not only more precious to me than my mortal life, but more than my immortal soul.'

'Such love, if you really felt it, would be impious idolatry, young man. But I think more charitably of you. It is easy to deceive oneself when passion is concerned. Your attachment for her might go to great lengths, and yet, if your soul were brought into competition with it, you might prefer the latter. Extravagant language is often used to tinsel over very common feelings—not that I judge this to be the case with you, by no means; but I think that grief leads you to over-rate your devotion to her, great as I know it to be.'

'You talk so calmly, my lord, that I could fancy you had never loved.'

'You would be incorrect in your fancy—I have loved as deeply and permanently as yourself; albeit, I would not peril my soul to indulge it.'

'I suppose the object of your love was some icy Gentile dame, who visited masses, and conned her confessor's breviary duly, so passing for a paragon.'

'No—a maiden of Hebrew birth and education.'

'Say you an Hebrew, my lord?' was Gesta's hasty exclamation.

'Aye, master Gesta—and she lies before you!'

There was silence for a moment; the knight's voice was expressive of deep emotion as he resumed—

'My imagination was early filled with the report of her uncommon learning and accomplishments; her fame for minstrelsy, too, was always in my ears. When I heard her sing, by her father's permission in that place of enchantment, her home, her exquisite voice, and still more exquisite beauty, moved me in a way never to be forgotten. You remember that hour. I married the lady to whom the king and my father, the earl of Lancaster, had affianced me. I banished by every means the image of the Jewess from my breast, but you know a deeply rooted affection will not be utterly torn up without the life to which it clings. Have I confessed enough? The fair Judith has never been an object of indifference to me. For her sake I am resolved never to plight my hand again to living woman.'

Gesta, prompted by sudden generosity, held out his hand to the knight, who took it—both were nearly equally excited.

'She is now beyond the reach of our avowals, my lord, let us respect each other's pangs. One secret worth a world I will impart to you—*she loved you*. Feed on that knowledge when you remember her, and then pity me, who can enjoy no such balm.'

'Dare I believe you?' exclaimed the agitated knight. 'She loved me!—that is truly a thought to feed upon. But I pray you do not mislead me even though she be no more. Tell me if you are *certain* of it.'

'Perhaps you may be able to convince yourself, my lord. In yonder chest lies a letter which she wrote to you during her imprisonment. The executioner had undertaken to deliver that, with several others enclosed in a packet, to the Jewish high priest, who is now in this town, but as soon as I came he entrusted it to me, supposing, by my gaberdine and badge, that I was one of her people, as indeed I always wish to be considered.'

The knight threw up the handsome lid of the chest, and, plunging his gauntleted hand down among delicate veils, and scarfs, and kerchiefs, of silver gauze, gold tissue, and similar ethereal substances, brought up the letter he sought. The hermit then entering with a lamp enabled him to read it. When he had finished it his manner altered altogether. He came to the side of the straw pallet, and dropping on one knee, lifted the cold and snowy hand of the Hebrew victim to his lips with ardent tenderness.

'You are right—she has loved me,' he whispered to Gesta, with a crimsoned cheek; 'she loved me to the last hour of her stay here before being dragged forth to execution. Oh, that she could recover! By the cross of Jerusalem, she should mourn and suffer no more!'

'I conquer in myself, at last, the natural jealousy which always waits on a true passion, my lord, and say that I should taste of a real felicity if I could see her revive to be yours.'

Perhaps Gesta overrated his fortitude; however, he spoke sincerely at the moment.

'A thought has struck me, my sons,' said the hermit, 'I might try to take from her a little blood.'

'Try anything that you think likely,' exclaimed the knight. 'Call the gaoler in, he will provide you

with a towel and basin, and bandages, for a gold coin, no doubt.'

The man was called in, and the knight put a piece of gold, of high value, into his hand, while the hermit told him what he should want for the operation.

'The priest who bleeds the prisoners sometimes does not live far off, and if you like, your reverence, I will go to him for a lancet.'

'Do so—only be quick!' cried the knight and hermit, both at once.

Away went the gaoler, and soon returned with the necessary instrument. It was not in the very best possible condition, but as the rust with which it was generally encrusted did not extend quite to the tip, the hermit pronounced that in the absence of a better it would do. Sundry petty difficulties, according to the gaoler, were in the way of procuring the other things wanted by his reverence; but it was pretty evident that a second piece of gold, were Lord Hugh inclined to give it, would speedily remove them.

The knight, not perceiving the drift of the fellow's talking and lingering so soon as Gesta, the latter plucked his purse from his sleeve and threw a shekel on the floor, which was readily pocketed by the rapacious gaoler, and the things required were brought with a celerity that evinced they had been at hand.

Gesta gently returned the head of Judith to its harsh pillow.

'Now, sir knight,' said the hermit, 'hold you this arm out thus—you, master Gesta, keep the basin steady there—that will do exactly. Now, holy Virgin, give us success!' and, muttering some Latin prayers, he brought the point of the lancet close to the thin blue vein which crossed the white surface of the inner bend of Judith's left arm.

It was a moment of intense expectation that succeeded. The skin was pierced—one drop of blood dropped upon that hand of Gesta which tremblingly held the basin—he started, looked at it, but would not on any account have wiped it away. 'Precious drop!' he inter-

nally exclaimed, 'I should be glad if thou couldst remain there until my last moment!'

'She cannot be dead, reverend father,' cried the knight, 'or this vein would not bleed at all!'

'I hope she is not,' was the hermit's evasive answer, 'but you see it bleeds no more.'

'The last chance is gone!' exclaimed Gesta, with an appearance of the wildest misery. 'And now let the heavens and the earth fall together in one tremendous wreck! let another deluge drown and utterly extinguish the whole race of mankind! I am indifferent to everything after this hour!'

'The visitations of Providence are but for a season,' said the hermit; 'sorrow and joy in this world succeed to each other like the clouds and sunshine of April; unmingled misery can never be the lot of a being that God has created, and it is good for man that he taste sometimes of the cup of bitterness. Look up, my son! you are young—you have many paths of active life open for your emulation—you should not sink so entirely under *one* affliction. Be consoled.'

'Man! do not insult my agony with your vain and vulgar homilies—I abhor them!' cried Gesta, beside himself with the anguish of his feelings. 'Keep them for those who have loved *ordinary* women!—for those on whom nature and fortune have lavished their favours! By heaven and earth! I will mortally hate the man or woman who, after this moment, dares mention consolation to me!'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE hermit stood stooping with the lancet in his hand, regret for the fate of the Hebrew lady, and sympathy for those who mourned her, apparent on his reverend face; the knight, resting on one knee, held out the white and beautifully rounded arm, keeping his eyes fixed still sanguinely on the opened vein which had swelled under the touch of the lancet; and Gesta, with dis-

traction and despair in every gesture, surveyed, by the light of the lamp he had snatched up, that colourless face which to him eclipsed the sun.

For a little space the three were in this position. The knight was the first to break the ominous silence of the cell—he cried out joyfully—

‘By the cross of Jerusalem, father, she lives! See—see! the blood flows freely!’

At that moment Gesta felt a shock like that of dissolution through his frame. Judith had opened her eyes, and now looked upon him. He remained uplifting the lamp over her face, immovable until she gasped, dropping her eyelids, and turning her head quickly as if pained by the rays of light falling upon her eyes.

‘Lady—revive—awake!’ exclaimed the knight, with eager gladness. ‘We are your friends!’

‘Softly, knightly sir—be not too hasty,’ whispered the hermit, with benevolent authority. ‘Go back both of you, my sons, out of her sight and hearing—she will not be fit to listen to any of your love stories yet awhile, let me tell you.’

‘Hermit,’ cried Gesta, with fiery looks, ‘I will not stir from her! Judith!—beloved Judith! speak but one word to gladden the heart of him whom you used to call your brother!’

‘My dearest brother!’ faintly murmured Judith, and, languidly raising her hand as he hung over her, she took hold of the neck of his gaberdine, and repeated the words. Gesta regarding neither the knight nor the hermit, kissed her fondly.

‘Well, if you are obstinate,’ said the hermit, looking kindly on the tearful greeting of the two, ‘I must let you take your own course. But she will mend faster if she be left alone and kept quiet.’

‘She can understand now what is said to her,’ cried Gesta, ‘ask her if I shall leave her. If she say yes, I will obey with the docility of a

child—if no, legions shall not force me hence!’

‘Stay with me a little, dear brother and friend,’ said Judith softly but distinctly, still holding, as if unconsciously, his gaberdine, and shuddering as though she sought from him protection against her enemies.

‘You hear her?—you hear her!’ cried Gesta to the hermit and knight. ‘Aye, beloved Judith! I will stay by thee!—and, oh, that I could never quit thee!’

The knight was assisting the hermit to bind up her arm—Judith seemed as yet unaware of his presence. When the tape had been properly fastened, however, he addressed her a second time:—

‘Lady, do you know me?—I am Lord Hugh, for whose child’s death you have been so infamously persecuted. I am come to your feet for pardon—and am ready to devote my life to your service.’

Judith instantly sprang up, but being weak and giddy would have fallen again had not Gesta caught her in his arms; she did not attempt to repel him, but leaned on him as familiarly and affectionately as though he had been really her brother.

‘Help me, dear Gesta, to yon seat,’ she said. He did so, and sitting down there by her side, supported her for an instant.

‘That will do—now I am better—thank you, Gesta. You were always kind to me, and faithful to my father. You never deserted us in a time of trouble. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, bless you! Lord Hugh, I am glad if you do justice at last to me and my wronged father. To-morrow, if I live to see it, I may be stronger than I feel now—I will then speak with you. Good hermit, is that you whom I see here? I expected to have awakened now in the abodes of the blessed, and not in this dismal place. I have undergone much since I wrote to you in Lincoln, reverend sir.’

‘Daughter, too well I know you.

have. But be comforted now. Your deliverance is at hand.'

'How came I to escape that horrible gallows and the hungry flames which were waiting for me? What miracle has Jehovah wrought on my behalf?'

'The Lady Isabella, daughter, sent each of us whom you see before you to stop the execution by copies of a letter from the king taking from the abbot his civil power, and commanding that you should be tried by himself in person.'

'The blessing of the Lord, as the dew from heaven, and the fatness of the earth, be hers continually!' ejaculated Judith, clasping her hands and raising her liquid eyes upwards.

'Amen!' responded the hermit. 'But I must let you know that the Lady Isabella sent off me and Lord Hugh six hours before master Gesta, who, notwithstanding has won all the glory of your rescue. Thus it fell out—my Lord Hugh, I, and his esquire, were following the abbot and his people by the sound of their horses' bells, but in a wood full of awkward paths, we unwittingly lost them, and went after a hawking party. Full five hours we spent endeavouring to find out which way the abbot had gone, and then the knight and I parted, taking different routes. It pleased the holy mother of Jesus to lead me hither by a more direct way than he—I arrived at the scene of confusion very soon after master Gesta, who was then on the scaffold raging like a wild bull in a net.'

Judith looked in Gesta's face with a glance of the deepest gratitude, then asked him to describe what had taken place before the hermit came—he did so, with truth and eloquence.

'And, my Lord Hugh, when you arrived—'

'Then, lady, to my misfortune, I could only see another rejoicing in the success which should have been mine. But by whatever hand your rescue was affected, I rejoice that it was affected. I hope yet to prove myself a true knight in your cause.'

'If you can find my father, and cheer him, my lord, you may command my heart's best thanks.'

'I have seen Jocenus, lady, and have endeavoured to persuade him that all will yet be well for you both.'

'Seen him!—ah! have you indeed! My poor father!' exclaimed Judith. 'And how, I pray you, did he look?—and what did he say?—who was with him?—where was he?—and who ministered to his comforts? Oh, tell me quickly, my lord! I have heard nothing of him since that stormy hour when we and our home were parted.'

'Gesta can tell you more of him than I, lady. I have only been able to see the merchant once—he has been with him throughout his troubles I believe.'

'Has he?—while I live I shall remember that. But tell me, Gesta, I beg of you, everything you can think of that concerns him—and first say, is he in health?'

'He is—in as good health as could be expected—considering how much he has undergone.'

'You speak with sadness—your looks belie your words. Gesta, you are trying to deceive me. Perhaps he has been taken prisoner—perhaps I have no longer a father! Speak as on your death-bed to me!—hide nothing from me! If you attempt to do so, I shall infallibly think the worst.'

'Beloved Judith! if I were now on my death-bed I should say the same as I have said.'

'He is in as good health as could be expected,' that was what you said, Gesta,—'as could be expected considering the hardships he has undergone.' But what hardships? He may have been tortured! famished! and be now praying for the last stroke of mercy which shall relieve him from agonies too great for human endurance.'

'Do not you torture yourself needlessly, dearest Judith! I solemnly assure you that he has not been in the hands of his foes since you parted from him. He has been

lodged safely in the neighbourhood of Lincoln—Leoni has supplied him with food, and is now keeping him company during my absence. The hardships to which I alluded, were the loss of his wealth and the loss of you.'

'And both shall be restored to him before long,' said the knight.

'I could say let the wealth go—I heed it not,' said Judith; 'but since it contributes in so many ways to my father's security and happiness, I check the feeling, and hope, my lord, that as you say, both will be restored to him, as, indeed, justice loudly demands.'

'I hope I have your forgiveness, lady, for believing the abbot's lying statement to your prejudice.'

'Speak not of that at present, my Lord Hugh,' said Judith, growing paler, 'I am not equal to the subject—to-morrow.'

'Yes—yes,' interposed the hermit, 'you have talked to her enough, my sons, for this evening; she will relapse again if you fatigue her.'

'We will bid you good evening then, lady,' said the knight.

Judith bent her head to him with a distant respect, peculiarly chilling to the crusader's fresh-kindled flame. But when Gesta was leaving her, she suffered him to kiss her hand, and fervently cried—

'Jehovah bless you, and make you happy, dear friend. She then inquired where he was going to lodge for the night. He replied in the prison, which he was not permitted to leave until Judith should be removed back to Lincoln to be judged by King Henry.

'I hope that will be soon,' said she, 'for then I trust that I shall see my father. Hermit, you will stay with me a little longer? I should be glad to talk with you alone.'

'Not this evening,' said the father, 'you must lie down and sleep directly. I will put this lamp here—it will burn through the night, for I have poured fresh oil into it.'

'You are right, reverend sir—I

feel myself utterly exhausted, and must wish you good night.'

'Benedicite, daughter—the Virgin Mary be good unto you. But in a few minutes I shall bring you some comforting wine-posset to the door, and some warm water with which you may refresh your hands and face; then I hope you will sleep well with the aid of another warm blanket that I will get for you by some means.'

'I cannot utter all the thanks I feel, hermit.'

'Pooh—pooh. Let me see what else you will need. I will shake up the straw before I go—there now, try that. And if you require aught in the night, knock thrice at the door—thus—and tell the gaoler to call me—I shall bid him be on the alert.'

Left to solitude once more, Judith offered her wordless aspirations of thankfulness to that Divine Being who she believed had stretched out His arm for her preservation. She then threw herself on her pallet and lay musing upon the strange vicissitudes of fortune she had experienced. She could not think that her life was yet at all secure; there were so many serious crimes arrayed against her; the abbot was still powerful—the king was not firm-minded enough to be just in case his court were against her; and since he had condemned so many nobly-born Christians for the mere suspicion of treason, how could she hope to obtain from him a favourable judgment, being charged with the same. Her father had now no costly gifts to offer his highness for the protection of himself and daughter, as in former times. This train of thought turned her thanksgiving again into prayer that she might still remain prepared for the worst.

'Perhaps it would have been better if the Lady Isabella had not sent,' said she, 'then all would now have been over. But let me not be selfish. While my poor father is spared the certain intelligence of my death, he will sustain himself upon hope.'

The hermit knocked at the door, and Judith received the posset, the warm water and the blanket. The posset was excellently made according to a receipt which has not reached modern times, and after having remained so long without refreshment, excepting only the little wine she drank at the gallows-house, it proved exceedingly welcome to her.

'In my best days,' said she soliloquising, as she partook of it, 'I could not have relished this as I do now. Want, and the bad prison fare, have made my appetite much less fastidious than it used to be. So, formerly, I thought little of those attentions I was constantly receiving, but now, the least act of kindness touches me to the quick. Thus good comes of evil. I am benefited by the discipline I have undergone, and if ever I am restored to prosperity again, I shall know how to value it the more, for having once been deprived of it. Yes, it has been good for me that I have been afflicted.'

Again her thoughts reverted to her late narrow escape, and she felt as Lazarus of Bethany might have felt when he sat at the table of Jesus, after he had been raised from the grave by that wonderful Being. Having refreshed herself by the ablation of her hands and face in the warm water, and spread the thick blanket on the straw, she now strove to dismiss the teeming images of her mind, and to sink to sleep. It was long before she could succeed—the smarting of the bruises on her forehead, and the cut on her hand, combined with the excitement of her mental faculties to keep her wakeful.

Gesta and Lord Hugh divided her feverish reflections with her father. She had instantaneously caught from the manners of the knight the startling impression that she was not indifferent to him; and strange as it may sound, the value of this affection seemed lessened in her eyes now it was within her reach. The long-enduring and profound affection of Gesta for her, struggled

against her imaginative inclination of the crusader; nothing seemed to her too great a reward for the un-failing devotedness of Gesta.

'I will conquer myself!' she involuntarily exclaimed. 'Lord Hugh shall be banished from my heart, and henceforth it shall be *his* home who deserves my utmost gratitude.'

She fell asleep immediately after saying this, and awoke when the yellow rays of the glad morning first entered through the roof, chequering the stone floor and walls. Her closing reflections of the previous night were at once renewed, and having arisen, and partly dressed herself, she went to the chest, anxious to see if the letters were still there. Missing them, she appeared a little agitated, and mused awhile, leaning on the edge of the chest, then turning it upside down on the floor, examined the contents with trembling eagerness.

When she had assured herself that they were not there, she meditated again.

'I feel convinced,' she exclaimed, though I scarcely know wherefore, that Lord Hugh has had the letter which I had not intended he should have until I was dead. There was in his glance something of the exultation of one who knows himself loved. Well then—my long-hoarded secret is known to him. Why should I tremble thus?—why does my cheek burn, and my heart flutter so violently? It was no crime to love a knight honourably known to fame. Women of the loftiest and purest characters have given their love unsought to distinguished men. Ah! but Judith's heart is proud—it cannot brook the idea that he whom she has loved, and by whom she has been despised, rejected, should know his power over her. I will not again see the knight!—I will not behold the insolent triumph of his looks! I have been used to conquer—I will not humble myself to appear conquered!'

The gentle and elevated soul of the Hebrew lady was thus on a sudden involved in a tempest of

mortified feelings. She paced the cell in a state of great disquietude such as she had never known before. The wholesome pride of womanhood, under proper discipline, which would not 'unsought be won,' was on fire, and, to support its own dignity, unwisely determined to sacrifice the heart to which it belonged.

'I have it!' she suddenly cried; 'I will see him, and will take care to set him right as to my real sentiments. He shall not think that I am at his will!—that he can have me, or leave me, as he pleases!'

The last word was on her lips when the gaoler knocked rudely at the door, and asked if she was ready to see her friends.

'Not yet—in a few minutes,' she replied, tightening her girdle in a tremor, and endeavouring to arrange her hair. In a quarter of an hour he knocked again.

'They may enter now,' said Judith, striving to appear calm. She was sensibly relieved by the entrance of the hermit and Gesta unaccompanied by the knight.

'A pleasant morrow to you, daughter,' said the hermit cheerfully, 'how feels the arm?'

'Thank you, good hermit, I have scarce felt the least inconvenience from it, which is more than I can say of these bruises.'

'I will soon heal them for you, daughter; I know a herb that will infallibly cure the worst cuts or bruises within a day or two. How slept you?'

'Tolerably, reverend sir. I was visited by very troublesome dreams of the gallows and the stake.'

'Thank the Virgin, daughter, that they were only dreams. But here has been master Gesta as full of dismal dreams as yourself, if I might judge by his restlessness. He was to have passed the night with me, but every half hour or less he was running out to this cell door to inquire of the gaoler if you had called for any thing.'

'Were you indeed so anxious for me, Gesta?'

'Daughter, pray hear me:—as

truly as I am vowed to the service of our lady, I have preached to him until I have made myself hoarse against the sin of idolatry, but all to no purpose—he is determined to worship you.'

'You may amuse yourself, hermit, at my expense, as long as you please, uncommon circumstances, have, I suppose, drawn from me uncommon language. I cannot now conceal the real state of my feelings—I do not wish to do so—on the contrary, I glory in them!—but I will take care that they shall never be a source of pain to the object of their regard.'

'They shall be a source of happiness to her, Gesta,' exclaimed Judith, 'this good man shall be a witness that I receive your affection with that frankness which you have well deserved. There is my hand. I know that I bestow it where my father would approve.'

'What do I hear!' exclaimed the amazed Gesta, holding her hand in bewildered ecstasy. 'Do I not dream? Are not these sounds unreal?'

'No—real, dear Gesta!—all real!' said Judith, smiling affectionately on him. 'You see before you, Gesta, her who will be your wife when Jehovah hath restored her to her parent!'

'My wife!—*mine!* Oh, heavens and earth! On these knees of mine I bless you, angel, for the words! With these tears I thank you! and with my whole soul's homage I will strive to justify your condescension to yourself.'

'Rise, Gesta, and calm yourself. We have much to converse upon.'

The hermit would have made an excuse to withdraw, but Judith detained him.

'Stay, good sir, if it please you, and sit with us here awhile. You knew my mother, Claribel—she was your convert—you always seem to me as a bond of union between me and her.'

The hermit, so invited, sat down on the stone seat on the right of Judith, while Gesta sat on her left. They conversed on bygone days and

future prospects, the tone of their spirits being much elevated by the hermit's cheerfulness. An hour flew by swiftly and pleasantly, while Gesta seemed wrapped in bliss too mighty to last. Occasionally Judith became slightly abstracted, but quickly rallied herself again.

The hermit at length went out to see a repast prepared. Gesta then again threw himself at the feet of Judith, pouring forth the most impassioned speeches of love and gratitude.

'I am now your equal in fortune, Gesta,' said she. 'We are both worth nothing. You cannot therefore torment yourself with the idea of your condition in life being inferior to mine. If afterwards wealth should return to my father's house we shall share it together as the new and welcome bounty of heaven bestowed equally on both of us. The abode of our early years is laid in the dust—your unfortunate mother is dead—we have no ties to unite us to England, the scene of our wrongs—another land shall receive us, and there will we dwell in peace with my father.'

'Be it so, Judith! My soul is at your feet! What I feel there is no language to express! Any part of the world wherein you dwell would contain an elysium for me! I am yours!—yours only!—yours for ever!'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE knight was with the hermit when the latter returned.

'Lady,' said he, 'I have been well entertained by the sheriff, and have given him a full account of the abbot's schemes. He is disposed to do you all the kindness he can consistent with his duty, and I have permission from him to remove you to better lodgings.'

Gesta watched the fluctuating colour on her wasted cheek as the knight spoke, and his new-born joy was dissipated by the demon of jealousy.

'The governor of the gaol is waiting outside to conduct you to the

rooms which you are now to occupy,' said the knight, 'will it please you, lady, to remove thither now?'

'Certainly—I am at the governor's command, my lord,' replied Judith, with more studied formality than Gesta thought was exactly necessary.

'I will carry this chest for you myself, lady,' said the zealous knight, lifting it from the ground. Gesta detested him for his officiousness.

The hermit opened the door, and the governor led the way to a superior part of the prison, where he himself resided. At the top of a flight of steps he unlocked a door, and said to Judith—

'You will find this a more agreeable place; a fire is lit, and breakfast is laid, as this gallant knight directed.'

She entered the apartment, which looked cheerful indeed, when compared with that she had left. The fire blazed and crackled merrily; handsome oak chairs were placed against the walls, and a large round table exhibited, on a snowy cloth, several choice dishes.

'I fear, my lord, you found that chest heavy,' said Judith, as Lord Hugh set it down beside a door that led into a chamber.

'It is heavier than its size would have led me to expect, lady, but in my grasp it was a mere feather; wearing iron armour, and wielding the battle-axe and the two-handled sword, under the fierce sun of Palestine, has made my limbs hardly weaker than were those of the iron-hearted King Richard himself. Now, lady, sit down, and comfort yourself with the thought that your worst days are over. His highness, King Henry, has sent an express to command the attendance of the sheriff in Lincoln next Wednesday, and he is to bring his prisoner, the Hebrew heiress, with him.'

'When am I to set out on this welcome journey then, my lord?'

The sheriff has not yet determined, lady, but you will learn to-day.'

The knight, Gesta, and the hermit, sat at table with Judith. Gesta

was silent and thoughtful, the hermit cheerful, and the knight, sedulously attentive to Judith. If she but cast her eye toward a dish, he was instantly ready to press it upon her as anxiously as if his life depended on her eating. If she refused, he was full of fears about her health, and begged the hermit to tax his skill to the utmost to repair the ravages which her imprisonment had made in her constitution.

It was hard to say how Judith felt. More than once the tear started into her eye, but was checked before it fell. Of all the changes of life this was the last she should have expected. She could now detect no triumph in the knight's look, nothing but the humblest assiduity of a suitor who feared as much as hoped.

The cloth withdrawn, the hermit retired to his stated devotions, and an uncomfortable silence ensued. Gesta gazed at the crusader. The knight's noble figure leaned gracefully in the chair, set off to much advantage by the flexible and silvery chain armour; a silver collar, bearing the arms of the Gants beautifully wrought in gold, loosely encircled his well-rounded and erect throat, which the sun had not bronzed as it had his warlike countenance. His dark brown hair had been dressed by his esquire before he appeared in the presence of Judith, and his surcoat had been arranged with more nicety than usual. Gesta hated him for having taken these pains to appear pleasing in her eyes. But again, when he turned to look at Judith, he confessed to himself that the knight must be more than man not to wish to obtain her.

'And is she mine?' said he internally. 'No—it can never be! They are worthy of each other. She loves him more than it is possible she can ever love me. Love me!—the thought is ridiculous! Will she not always draw comparisons between me and him?—and will she not hate the bonds which unite her to one so despicable as myself? I see how it is. Gratitude prompts her to throw

herself away upon me! But shall I permit such a sacrifice?—perish the thought!'

And in the excitement of the moment he unconsciously clenched his hand and gnashed his teeth together.

Judith, who had been watching the sparks ascend up the chimney, started, and, as she met his eye, the secret thoughts of his heart stood bare before her. She perfectly understood his bitter ruminations, and the blood rushed back to her heart, leaving her face so pale that the knight anxiously inquired if she felt ill. In that change of look Gesta read the confirmation of his worst fears, and saw that he had vainly deluded himself with the prospect of happiness in an union with her.

'To possess her hand will not satisfy a passion so mighty as mine,' thought he. 'I must have her undivided heart, or I will not have her at all! I could better endure to wear out the rest of my life in loneliness, than to be the companion of one who regretted the ties which had made her mine. Yet, to call her my wife!—my own!—my beloved one!—and to have a right in her superior to every other! What transports shake me as I think of such bliss! Must I resign it?—must I push from me the delicious draught, and take instead the cup of wormwood? Yes, it must be so. Happiness has foresworn me for ever. Judith,' said he aloud, 'I am not well—I will return presently—the air of the court below may revive me.'

'Will these essences be of service to you?'

'No, Judith, no;,' then lowering his voice, he said, 'my sickness is of the heart, and you cannot relieve it, Judith. You would do so if you could, I know—but it is beyond your power.'

As soon as he had gone out the knight coughed, and looked on as if he would have spoken to Judith on some important subject; but she, feeling the embarrassment of her situation acutely, and determined to

avoid the avowal which she saw was coming, took her harp into her hand and busily employed herself in slackening and tightening the wires. The hermit returning, she embraced the first favourable opportunity of retiring into the inner apartment. There, sitting down, she covered her face, and wept, for the first time, the tears of shame and regret.

'What a want of delicacy have I shown!' she exclaimed. 'How awkward now is my situation. I was most unfemininely precipitate in accepting Gesta. And, oh, that letter—that letter!—what mischief has it not done me? The hermit, that is a good thought! I must speak with him.'

The first moment, therefore, when the father was alone in the room without, she came to him.

'Daughter,' said he, 'you look disturbed.'

'I am so, good hermit, and I need your advice and assistance.'

'If they be of any worth to you, consider them at your service.'

Judith was embarrassed.

'You have seen, have you not, reverend sir, the—the—manners of the knight?'

'Daughter, be plain with me—I will act as a father to you. Nay, you are much agitated—sit down and compose yourself before you speak further.'

'Good hermit, you have not answered my question.'

'I know that the knight seeks your love, daughter. There was a letter of yours which master Gesta told me the knight had—but you are very much disturbed.'

'It is nothing. And you know that I have given my troth to Gesta.'

'Truly I do—you made me a witness.'

'Well now, good hermit, you must be so kind as keep them both out of my presence until I reach Lincoln. Say what you think best to them, only do not let me suffer the pain of meeting either under present circumstances. You know I am now deprived of my father's

protection. It is not fitting that I allow myself their society.'

'I understand you, daughter, and commend your prudence from my heart. I will serve you in this particular.'

'Thank you a thousand times, good sir—and I beg that you will keep near me as often as you can. You seem as a protector sent by heaven to me.'

Accordingly during the five succeeding days of Judith's stay in the prison, the hermit was the only person who visited her. On the morning of the sixth she was brought out to the prison gate in order to commence her journey to Lincoln. A litter, hung with thick taffeta curtains was provided for her, and Gesta was beside it ready to assist her to enter. He pressed her hand when she had taken her seat, and fervently exclaimed—'God grant that you may be going to freedom and happiness!'

At this same moment, her heart bounded—Lord Hugh was riding in front of the guard which surrounded the carriage; he suddenly wheeled round, and kissed his hand to her with a chivalrous homage, that made her heart throb still more. The hangings dropped from her hand—she sank back in the soft seat—her solicitude for the uncertain future relieved by delightful susceptibility to the tender friendship which was watching over her.

Meanwhile the city of Lincoln was honoured with the presence of its royal master. The remains of the late baron of Lincoln, and his grandson, were deposited with due ceremony and magnificence in the cathedral, and grand masses were performed for the repose of their souls in all the fifty-two churches in the city.

After this the monarch held a grand council, or parliament, in the great hall of the palace, at which several laws were altered, and some new ones for the regulation of coin made. In the evening there was a banquet.

The day succeeding there was a

trial by combat on the city green, which the king and his court viewed from the terraces of the palace. After this heroic display, the wisdom and justice of which exceedingly gratified everybody, the king sailed in his gilded barge on the river, the banks being crowded with gaily-dressed spectators.

On the third day the monarch and his officers inquired into the claims upon the vast estates of the late Earl of Lincoln, to which there appeared no direct heir. The regal throne occupied the centre of the raised flooring in the hall, the chief judge sat on the same level, as did also the king's chaplain and the royal family. A long and gorgeous array of the chief prelates of the land moved up one aisle, under the stained windows, to the sound of sweet and solemn music; while up the other came the constable and marshal of England, with a host of other noble persons. These had taken their proper stations below the throne, and were conversing on the business of the day, when the king made his appearance. He possessed a mean presence—a timid and irresolute eye—which wandered to and fro the hall as if he feared to read 'traitor' in every countenance.

When the business of the morning had been opened, the king demanded if any were there who had claims to the earldom of Lincoln.

The seneschal of the castle presented on his knees a handful of bills.

'What call you these?' inquired the king, turning them over on his knee.

'They are the bills of people to whom his lordship, the earl, was indebted, your grace.'

The king passed them to his treasurer, bidding him see them paid.

'But take care,' said he, with that anxious meanness to which he was prone, 'that the knaves have not overcharged. If any advantage has been taken of the earl's death, let the offender be branded with a hot iron in the hand. You may pass out of the hall, seneschal,—you will

not be needed here again. Now, lords, how say you, are not these estates at our disposal? We have taken their debts, whose name seemeth to be legion, on our hands, is it not right that we have their profits?'

'Your highness should give ear to my suit,' said one of the barons present; 'I am a relation of the earl, and have a just right to part, at least, of his lands. I humbly crave the castle and domains of Sleaford and Newark.'

'Undoubtedly your grace should listen to him,' said the high chancellor; 'his title to what he sues for is good, and he ought not to be denied.'

'So say I,' cried de Montfort, the king's seneschal.

'And I—and I!' echoed other voices.

'Take the estates from me, lords, and dispose of them as you will,' said the king, with acrimony, for he had very particular objections against increasing the power of this claimant by any new possessions, and would much rather have taken from him what he already possessed.

'King Henry, I humbly plead for my rights,' exclaimed the baron, throwing himself on his knee at the foot of the throne. 'Friends and noblemen, your voices for me.'

'Hear him, your grace,' repeated the chancellor and others.

'You were one of those who kept Prince Edmund, my son, a prisoner in your castle awhile ago, I think,' said the king, frowning on his knightly petitioner.

'That was the fortune of war, your highness; he sought to drive me out of my own entrenchments because I had offended a partisan of his, and I happened to conquer in the affray. Shall I have my suit, royal Henry?'

'And you have many times fought against myself, among the rebellious barons who have made our reign miserable by their factious and hateful resistance to our kingly authority.'

'Sire, if you govern like a king I

will warrant that you shall be no more troubled with their resistance. We have only stood up for the charters your father gave us, and if we did less we should be guilty of disloyalty to his memory, and of treason against the good of the land. Say, my liege, shall I have my rights?"

The king whispered with the chief judge, and seemed angry at the remonstrance made to him. He then spoke in a low voice with Prince Edward, whereupon the haughty suppliant sprang up, and drawing his sword loudly from the sheath, exclaimed—

"Friends, you have seen my lawful right denied me—I take my leave of the council—I have no further business here."

Henry now looked alarmed, for he was easily over-awed by the proud menaces of the peers.

"We have not denied you yet," said he; "remain, and we will examine further into your claims."

"No, King Henry," cried the baron, "it is well known that I am the nearest of kin to the earl now living, and if that, and my deserts are not claim enough, why the devil himself may have the estates for me."

"We command you to come back on your allegiance!" exclaimed the king, as the baron was striding down the hall.

"Will your highness grant my suit?" was the knight's bold response as he made a pause.

"If thou canst prove thou art indeed nearest of kin to the deceased Earl of Lincoln, as you say, we will grant you your suit."

"I will vouch for that," said the constable.

"And I," said de Montfort, and others.

"You have vouched for that which is not true, lords," said the king, lowering again; "a son would be nearer—would he not?"

"Doubtless," answered the constable; "if a son of the earl were to be found in existence, he would take precedence of every other claimant."

"Guards," called out the king,

"fetch hither the young man who is in the blue chamber."

Gesta was conducted hither; he had taken the Jewish badge from his breast by the royal command. The king bade him advance to the foot of the dais steps before the throne.

"Who was your father?" asked the monarch; "speak aloud, and on your oath."

"The earl of Lincoln," was Gesta's firm reply.

"What mummerly is this?" cried the claimant of the estates, looking contemptuously on the deformed and meanly-dressed figure before him.

"You may look at him with what eyes you please," said the king, "he is the son of the Earl of Lincoln—aye, and he shall have provision out of his father's lands."

"Your grace may give the earldom and the lands to a monkey if your pleasure lies that way, for aught I care!—I shall sue no more for myself," said the baron. "Yet let whoever gets them look to himself! for I wear as good a sword as any my brave ancestors ever fought with."

"Are there any present who can support this young man's assertion that he is a son of the Earl of Lincoln?" asked the king.

"That can I do," said Prince Edward, throwing down his gauntlet on the floor; "and there is my defiance to the peer who dares deny that he ought to have the largest share of his father's lands!"

The baron caught up the gage as a token that he accepted the challenge. The king commanded him to resign it—but he deigned not to reply; Henry then besought his son to call back his defiance.

"No!" exclaimed that haughty prince; "if you, my royal father, know not how to support your own authority, faith of my life! your son will support it for you! I will chastise this baron for his insolence in the imperial presence."

The baron would have fiercely retorted had not the bishop of Lincoln interposed with irresistible argu-

ments, by which the one was reluctantly prevailed upon to return the gage to the floor from which he had taken it, and the other to resume possession of it.

Groteste then said—'I am an honest man, I hope you all know. I would not tell a lie for the sake of any thing or any person on earth! Well then, I say that the prince has spoken rightly and manfully, and that this Gesta, as he is named, was acknowledged before him, and before me, by the earl, whose last wish it was that this, his much injured son, should be granted an inheritance by the king.'

'What, bishop! you would make an earl of him?'

'Why not? I believe him to be a better man than many a one who bears that title.'

'You would make an earl of an owl next! But who was the mother of this aspiring son?—not the Countess of Lincoln?'

'Who his mother was, matters not,' said the king; 'the clergy will bear me out in giving him the rights of a lawfully-born heir, as there is no other son of the earl living.'

'The pope has commanded that there be no difference made between the rights of children born after marriage and those born before,' said the king's chaplain.

'That is the canon of the church,' pronounced the archbishop of Canterbury.

'Then I tell you, prelates, it is not the canon of the English law, neither will we abide by it!' said the baron, speaking for himself and his friends, who looked displeased, and murmured against the declaration of the pontiff.

'You may appeal against the decision at our next council if you will,' said the king, who merely wished to carry his point at present, without by any means wishing to establish such an objectionable maxim as law. 'You cannot blame me, however, lords, if I partly act in the question at issue upon the opinion of the holy fathers, and declare this Gesta to be my governor and keep-

er of the castles of Lincoln, and Newark, and Sleaford, for which he is to do me homage, at our great festivals, and to pay into my treasury, yearly, a sum which I shall hereafter appoint. Kneel down, Gesta. Son Edward, lend me your sword. Rise up Sir Gesta of Lincoln, knight, constable of Lincoln, Sleaford, and Newark. Be a true-liege man to our throne and state, and you shall not lack friends. You baron, in consideration of your relationship to the earl, we appoint the castle and lands of Osgodby, which belonged to him. Sincerely we hope, thus far, we have satisfied you all.'

But the baron was not satisfied with the bait that had been held out to him; full well he knew that Osgodby was hardly worth possession, and that the king had only granted it to quiet him, as nurses give baubles to children who cry for things of value. By placing Sleaford, and Newark, and Lincoln, in the custody of one who would have uncommon reasons for attachment to the king, he had, the baron thought with vexation, much strengthened his interests in this part of the county, and would be better enabled to defeat the efforts of those who sought to hold his arbitrary movements in check.

'Your grace may give Osgodby to your favorite with the other fortresses,' cried the resentful baron! 'the services he is to do you will fill a large scale, no doubt, and what you have given him would hardly be enough to weigh against them. Give him Osgodby too! I thank my bold ancestors that I have enough!—until my sword win me more! Oh, here come other suitors—let us see what luck they will meet with. Good day, holy legate, and abbot of Crowland! The sun of royalty shines bright this morn—blessed Mary grant it be not too hot for the fair harvests you expect. It has blasted my crops already!'

'We pardon your insolence, baron,' said the king, 'for the sake of the services your ancestors did our family.'

'And for the sake of the vengeance certain nobles would exact if a hand were laid on me,' said the baron, aside.

'We greet you, pious liege !' said the legate, presenting before the throne a piece of writing on vellum and pointing to a crooked mark at the bottom which supplied the place of a signature. 'You are a sworn and faithful son of his infallible prudence, Pope Innocent, whose legate I am, and a loving, valiant defender of the church militant of which he is the supreme head. The pope and the church now desire your ratification of this gift which it pleased God to induce the late earl of Lincoln to lay down at the feet of the church, whereby he purchased for himself everlasting forgiveness of all his sins. This mark was made by the earl, and this writing he duly consented to on his death-bed, of which his highness, Prince Edward there, is a witness.'

'I saw the earl make the mark, and heard the writing read to him,' pronounced the prince.

The king muttered to himself some unintelligible words which he wanted the hardihood to speak out, then taking the vellum, bent a quick and scrutinising glance upon it.

'I see the earl here endows the abbey of Crowland or any other benedictine over which the abbot may be placed, with eighty lordships, and seven towers, and two fortresses, all to be in the abbot's sole power ; and you, legate, are no less liberally supplied, the residue only being placed in the king's hands. The king thanks the earl ! much trouble we are likely to win from his legacy, but little profit. Nevertheless, when we have leisure, we will see to the confirming of these lordships to you both ; at present, other more pressing matters, call for our attention. Chancellor, what of the tax which was proposed yesterday ?'

By his thus hastily turning the subject, it was apparent to the legate and abbot, what indeed they had not before doubted, that some

difficulty would be experienced in bringing the king to ratify to them the possession of their booty. For policy sake they yielded without opposition to the vexatious delay he induced.

The baron who had been previously disappointed, could not refrain from a sneering laugh, aside.

'Abbot,' said he, speaking low, but still, as he intended, loud enough for the king to hear, 'his grace will make an exchange with you—he will bestow an Osgodby on you instead of the eighty lordships—perchance he may want them for some peasant jack who will serve him, when he is hard pressed, better than you.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE abbot had been accommodated below the hill in a monastery of grey friars ; thither he retired from the council, vexed and disappointed by the deferring of his wishes, but fearing nothing less than the storm which was about to burst upon him. Flushed with the greatness he had attained, he banished from his side that keen-visioned caution which had been wont to attend him. Precipitate now, and confident, he pressed on with stiff-necked audacity, little dreaming that his feet were on the brink of a yawning gulf.

He was musing loftily on the dignities that yet courted his grasp, in a chamber which the head of the house had with humility resigned to him, when he was informed that a lady-canoness was waiting in the library to speak with him on affairs of urgent importance. He felt assured it was the Lady Isabella. What could be her errand ? Something like a presentiment of evil mingled with the impatience to which he gave partial vent in brief and very pious ejaculations. The complexion of his face took a darker shade, and he stood irresolute whether to go to her or not. But now he violently shook off every troublesome feeling, and became as cold and hard as he desired to be. Thus

braced to bear whatever she might say, unmoved, he proceeded with slow and firm steps to the library.

Nevertheless, when he was in her presence, much of that forced stoicism vanished. She was alone; the white linen head-veil of her habit had been cast back from her face, whose every feature was marked with an earnestness of emotion amounting to intensity. She started forward on seeing him, and addressed him in the most moving terms.

'Robert—once dear to me!—once the hope, and pride, and comfort of my heart!—O, Robert, listen to me before it is too late! See before you her whom you once valued, imploring you to save yourself! Forget what I am now—view me as what I once was—then I may hope you will be intreated by me.'

'Excellent Lady Isabella, you astonish me! What is the meaning of all this?'

'That your ruin—your utter ruin—is near, unless you will resolve to preserve yourself by an upright course of action. But no time is left you to deliberate. The Divine handwriting on the wall has appeared to doom you, and even now the 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,' is striking awe into those who are preparing to witness the accomplishment of heaven's retribution on your head.'

'If heaven, as you say, has doomed me, how can I, a poor mortal, attempt to alter its decrees?'

'O, Robert, check I implore you by these tears, that scornful and impious pride, which will bring swift destruction on your head!'

'Isabella, sit—nay, I must be obeyed—there, rest you on that chair, and when you are calmer—but not until then—tell me what danger threatens me.'

'I cannot tell you that—I can only entreat you to avert the evil by consenting *at once* to do justice to the injured. Restore the wealth of Jocenus and his daughter—let their innocence be made to appear publicly—and—'

'Stay, Isabella!—on all such topics I am stone! Waste not time

or breath in interceding with me for those you have named. I have not acted without well weighing the quality and consequences of my actions. To recede in the smallest degree I will not!'

'Not to save your reputation from the deepest disgrace?'

'No. You hear my decision. It is absolute as that of the ancient Medes and Persians.'

'Then my errand is done—farewell. You may yet wish you had listened to Isabella. Even now, you perhaps relent. I can point out a way by which your character may be spared, and full justice be done to those you have wronged.'

'I will not draw back from my self-appointed path—no, not one inch! And hark you, Isabella! so little I think of your warnings, that I tell you you will yet see me wearing the mitre of this rich see which your brother now wears. Nor will I stop there!—a higher eminence than that will I reach—an archbishopric shall be mine! Nay, more than that, I will be the chief judge of all this realm! Not judge-itinerant merely—to have my power taken away at an hours' notice by a crooked messenger or a drivelling hermit! but *chief*-judge, mark you. And higher yet will I go, and both in the civil and spiritual state of Christendom at large—I will rule!'

'O, mad ambition! So might a lunatic rave in his dying hour. Your disease is incurable—I renounce my last hope of you.'

'But are you going, Isabella, without satisfying me as to the nature of these dangers which you think so formidable? Who are the promoters of them?—from what quarter, and when am I to look for them?'

'All whom you think your friends are the promoters of them—you may look for them in the highest quarters—and the time is near at hand. God grant you repentance before the last sands of your life run out.'

'She has gone. It was a strange and unlooked-for interview! There is certainly something afoot which

threatens me. But I am so well backed by the legate, and through him by the pope, that I must be a very child to fear. Fear—pssha! Have I not often told myself that I fear nothing on earth, in heaven, or in hell? I have proceeded admirably in my plans hitherto, excepting a few hindrances which are only trifling. I must push on boldly now to obtain the other prizes at which I aim. If the Jewess had only perished I should not have had the least possible misgiving—but I like not the reflection that both she and her father are yet alive in spite of my fiction about the young saint. The people are as easily moved one way or another as a feather in the wind. They might give ear to a report that I had seen no vision, and so I should lose my credit with them. But away with shadows like these! I was once a poor servitor in a monastery—now I am an abbot! Before long I will be a bishop!—and so on—and on—and on—from one rise to another, without once stopping by the way to take breath, until I look down with triumph, and with desolating power, on those who would hinder my progress.’

We must again lift the curtain in the council hall. Forty-eight hours have elapsed since Gesta's extraordinary rise, and he is there again—but how changed in appearance! Excepting his deficiency in height, there seems now little remarkable in the formation of his body. The protuberance on his chest has been well concealed by the art of the most skilful tailor Lincoln can boast; and the too great elevation and breadth of his shoulders are relieved by a deep falling collar of point-lace, tied negligently with gold cord. In place of his peasant frock or gaberdine and serge, we see a handsome tunic and pantaloons of brown velvet, and his shoes are embroidered, running out in a long peak at the toe, in the fashionable style. His long neglected hair has been shortened, and arranged in a way more becoming to his features, while the yellow Jewish *mortier* cap has given place to one

of graceful shape, composed of embroidered black velvet.

The change in his fortunes has improved his air and complexion; his cheeks are no longer cadaverous, but are tinted with a lively colour produced by excitement; his eyes are no longer misty and dull, but are sparkling and expressive. An esquire of his late father is with him ready to perform his slightest wish.

He was leaning against one of the beautiful marble columns which divided the hall into three long aisles; near him might be seen the hermit resting on his short staff, conspicuous by his long snowy beard and singular stoop; others of our acquaintance were close by. There was Aaron the leech, watched by a servant of the prince, his abject person seeming to shrink into complete nothingness under the trepidation of fear; his wiry red beard was continually on the move as he muttered to himself, and his ferret eyes stared around with an uneasy expression. He frequently shrugged his shoulders, and his pouncet-box was in constant play. The servants in the hall shrank back from him with disgust and scorn, when they caught sight of his dirty face. Aaron seemed to wax more servile than ever, ready to stoop down and kiss off the dust from their feet.

There, too, was Philip the rabbit-keeper and boatman, looking at everything and everybody with great admiration. The presence of royalty, and of the noblest persons in the land, filling him with awe, while he almost fancied himself in a dream.

‘What would poor Ralph have thought of this?’ ejaculated the guileless fellow, thinking of his old companion in the lonely cabin of the fens: ‘little did he or I think, when that priest and the Jew asked us for a night's lodging, that they would be the means of bringing me into such grand places as this! Here's a sight now for one that's been used to nothing else but a bit of a cockle-shell of a boat all one's life! I wonder how it will all enl-

Here comes he that was the prior of Icanno—a man that will never be sainted. But what a majesty he carries about him! I never thought he had such a grand presence. One might easily take him for the pope by his high looks, and cloth of gold, and jewels. There are precious stones of all colours on his gold mitre. His robe is trimmed with such rich lace as I never saw before.'

The abbot paused in the mid aisle, up the centre of which he was advancing with a magnificence that astonished all, and piqued many whom it was his particular interest to please. He had left the council on the day but one before without waiting for its conclusion, and the altercation which took place on the subject of the tax proposed by the king prevented him from learning Gesta's good fortune. He was now informed of it in a few hasty sentences by a priest, and when moving on to his place, saw the individual himself in altered guise.

'By the relics of St. Edward! I wish that he had had a coffin given him instead of castles!' muttered the abbot, internally; 'and instead of that goodly dress of his, I wish that he had had a shroud!'

Standing left of the throne, and looking down the hall, he saw a monk of Icanno, the same who had assisted him some time ago to take the body of Sir Hugh out of the merchant's well. He was discomposed, and kept his eyes fastened on him as on a basilisk.

'What evil is in the wind now?' thought he. 'I supposed this man was six hundred miles away! Did I not send him to a French priory out of my way? What crotchet can have brought him back again? Surely fate is not at war with me!'

'You seem disturbed, my lord abbot,' said the king, speaking with such suddenness and in so sharp an accent, that the person whom he addressed was shaken like a sick man who hears the death-owl shriek at midnight. 'If I mistook not the direction of your glance,' continued Henry, 'you saw a brother of the

house over which you formerly presided—yet the man has a mild aspect enough—methinks there is nothing about his looks which should have daunted an honest and a holy prelate.'

The king laid such a marked stress on the word *honest*, that the abbot repeated it with surprise and anger. Henry seemed not to attend to the repetition, but called upon the court to proceed with their deliberations at once. Still the abbot was determined to think himself secure, and the triumphant pride which sat upon his brow did not in the least abate. 'The time will come,' he imagined, 'when this king must bend to me as his father bent to the pope's messengers. I will then humble all that I now see before me.'

'Pious sovereign, elect of heaven, hear me for the pope!' cried the legate, endeavouring to throw into his cracked and feeble voice a suitable dignity, and rising from the chair with which his decrepid frame had been accommodated. 'I ask your confirmation to the election of this abbot of Crowland here present, and to the grants of lands to him and to me, which this writing contains. The prince-royal hath dutifully vouched for the earl's assent to what is here set down, and that this mark is veritably of the earl's own making.'

'I know that the earl did *not* assent to it!' exclaimed the prince. 'I know that he heard it read, and I saw him make the mark; but faith o' my life! there was no assent in the matter.'

The legate appeared transfixed in speechless rage—the abbot was merely astonished—he refused to see that circumstances were combining against him. The king smiled, and the other prelates and courtiers listened with tickled ears, rejoicing in the mortification which was apparently coming on the covetous legate and his ally.

'Sire and my lords!' exclaimed the prince, 'how think you these lands were obtained?'

'Tell us plainly, son! Speak out without scruple!'

'Why, by threatening the dying baron with everlasting despair if he refused, and by promising him all the good things the next world contains if he complied. Was it to be wondered at that he granted those things which he knew death would wrench from him, to buy his soul's good? But are such practices to be suffered? Why, my lords, at this rate, all the kingdom would soon be in the itching palm of mother church!'

'They shall not be suffered!' exclaimed the king looking around the assembled council to receive their countenances for his determination. 'But afterwards we will talk of this. De Burgh,' he addressed himself in a peremptory manner to the chief-judge, 'let the Jewess be tried.'

'Your highness must not put off our suit again,' said the abbot, in a commanding voice, 'unless you are prepared to meet the thunders of the church.'

'Must I not, indeed, abbot! pray who is he that dares tell the king he must not?'

'He is one whom I support by the all-powerful will of Rome!' exclaimed the legate. 'He is one, King Henry, whose voice must, and shall be, heard here with deference! If these lands be not ratified to him, and to me, I will lay an interdict on every mile of ground they cover; churchyards shall be shut up, and the dead shall be thrust like dogs in unhallowed ground, without one rite or blessing! Churches shall be closed—there shall be no prayers for either the dead or the living! Those who are in purgatory, shall remain in purgatory! and those who are unconfessed and unabsolved, shall remain without confession and without absolution! Those who dare attempt to resist my interdict, shall be visited with bell, book, and candle, and consigned to misery forever! Tremble, therefore, Henry! Tremble, therefore, you who support him in depriving the church of the property which the pious have bequeathed to it!'

'Meaning, I suppose, the earl,' said the prince, sarcastically.

The legate proceeded, half suffocated with passion—

'You are blind as Sampson was! and if you attempt to pull down the pillars of the temple I tell you it will be to your own ruin!'

'Faith o' my life! if the pillars of the temple be the lands of England, the sooner they are down the better, whatever be the consequence!' cried the prince, boldly. 'We want all England's grounds for Englishmen, and English wars—holy church must build her pillars of other materials!'

'We will have no more discussion on this matter now,' said the king, rendered daring by the supporting glances he met around. 'Let the Jewess be brought, there are many singular questions to be decided before that which relates to those lands.'

Here the bishop of Lincoln sent his page from the hall with a private message to the Lady Isabella, who, instantly crossing the cloisters, proceeded to the queen's apartment in the royal lodgings. Her highness presently came out, leaning on the arm of the distinguished canoness and followed by a train of noble ladies. They appeared within the grand entrance of the hall at the moment when the unfortunate Judith, guarded by Royston and Garston, with six soldiers entered a side doorway. The judges and barons rose on perceiving the queen, and remained standing until she reached the gilded throne which had been prepared for her by the side of her consort. Henry himself advanced below the dias steps to hand her to her place, a mark of respect which she acknowledged with a smile of equal majesty and sweetness. Her two celebrated sons, Edward and Edmund, stood one on each side of her throne, and their reverential carriage toward her was strikingly contrasted with their previous manners to the king. It seemed, too, as if the awe she inspired irresistibly and insensibly compelled them to change for the better their behaviour to that parent

whom they were too much accustomed to despise. Henry found in her presence the protection his weak-mindedness required, and he acknowledged it by appealing continually to her judgment, and by being guided in all doubtful cases by her advice.

The queen singled out the worthiest and ablest of the court by a gracious inclination of the head, passing over the rest with an air of superiority. The abbot clearly perceived that she wilfully avoided his eye, and the legate, though armed with the authority of the pontiff, received no more favour. These were bad omens, but the infatuated devotee of ambition regarded them not. Royalty was nothing in his eyes; he himself was shortly to be, like the sun, the radiant centre of all constellations—the greatest of the great.

Bending his proud glances on the Lady Isabella, who stood near the queen, clad from head to foot in robes of the purest whiteness, he found that she was fixedly regarding him, but with so much profound sorrow and despair, that he was chilled to the heart. He heeded not his looks, but like a statue gazed on him immovably, until the queen spoke to her, and dispelled her bitter reverie.

Judith was now led up to the seats of the judges, who interrogated her for some time. She answered their questions with perfect mildness and patience, her deportment eliciting the admiration of all, even those who most hated her. The witnesses against her were few, and their evidence was not received as very important. The letters which she had written to the rabbins and others of her nation, at her father's dictation, were the dumb witnesses, the silent accusers, most to be feared. She was asked if the Hebrew characters of those letters had been made by her—she distinctly replied in the affirmative. Her friends trembled for her then, and more especially when she was shown Aaron's translation of them

into Norman-French, and asked if the true sense had been rendered. She examined them carefully, asking for a pen, with which she made a few trifling erasures and alterations, while the court was on the tiptoe of expectation; then laying down the pen and the writings, pronounced them 'as nearly as possible correct.'

'Noble creature!' mentally exclaimed the Lady Isabella, who viewed these instances of her unflinching sincerity with mingled pain and delight.

'She has destroyed herself, I fear by that admission,' whispered the crusader, at the bottom of the hall, who had entered at the same time with Judith.

'Destroyed herself, my son! no, not if a grain of justice he left in England,' returned the hermit. 'But whither go you with such impetuous looks?'

'Take your hand from my arm, father—I must expose yon villain abbot—I have delayed longer than I ought to have done—held back by you. How know I that you are in a verity her friend? You may be keeping me silent that she may perish—let me go!'

'Forbear, rash knight,' said the hermit, tightening his grasp of the crusader's arm. 'Have I not assured you, as I desire the health of my soul, that there shall not a hair of that innocent maiden's head be hurt for the death of your son? Has not the Lady Isabella repeated my assurance and promised to preserve her? Go to—you will mar all if you are hasty. Remain unseen, if you can until you are wanted. The means by which her enemies will be defeated are planned and cannot fail.'

'Father, if you are deceiving me, double woe be on your head! may all your after life be full of bitterness, and pain, and sorrow, and despair.'

'Be it so; if she perish for your child's death, her blood be on me.'

The fatal letters were now read aloud one by one, and certainly no-

thing but prejudice or malignity of the darkest sort could make from their contents such charges as the abbot had founded on them. Nevertheless, in those wise days, excellent individuals had been convicted on evidence more frivolous, and before the king would decide whether to reject or assent to the conclusions that had been drawn from these letters, he determined to judge the Jewess upon the crucifixion of Sir Hugh. If she were guilty of that, he should set her down as guilty of all the rest; if she were innocent of that, he should read the letters more favourably.

'Let the accused draw near,' said the queen softly to her consort, 'and give her leave to put questions to those who witness against her.'

'Good,' said Henry, nodding approvingly: and turning to the abbot he commanded him to relate his story of the finding of the child's body, while Judith was placed opposite to him. When the abbot had concluded, Judith, who had wrought herself up to the required pitch of firmness, fastened her large and dazzling eye upon him, and in accents thrillingly distinct, though very soft, articulated—'Thou shalt not bear false witness.' Up flew the blood of the false accuser to his cheeks and temples—he saw a sensation to his prejudice spreading through the assembly with the rapidity of fire among stubble. Sudden confusion palsied his utterance, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and his brain was giddy as though he was upon the brink of a lofty height from which he was horribly tempted to throw himself headlong. A fierce oath escaped him unawares—the justices were surprised—the prelates raised their eyebrows, and exchanged meaning glances.

'My lord abbot,' said Judith, and her voice again was soft and exquisite music, such as once heard must haunt the ear for ever after, 'if you acknowledge in your soul

the existence of a Supreme Judge of all the earth, I request you, in His solemn presence, to declare whether you did not, while my father was a prisoner in the castle, before these terrible charges were heard of, offer to send both him and me, with the residue of our wealth safely out of this kingdom, if he would yield to you a large sum of money that you needed—shall I hesitate to say the truth?—for the legate of the pope, and for an Italian prelate.'

'Domechino, archbishop of Canterbury,' whispered the chancellor to one of the scarlet robed judges, 'it was Domechino—I thought his sudden friendship for the abbot had no very honest beginning.'

'How now, my lord abbot!' cried the king, 'are you moonstruck that you gaze about you so bewildered? Speaks the maiden that which is true?'

'I will not answer—I will not be catechised by a condemned infidel,' exclaimed the abbot, recovering himself and clenching his hand.

'Perhaps it is hardly seemly, my dear,' observed Henry to his queen.

'Let the maiden question him,' was the decisive reply; 'you see he is already on the rack. We shall soon perceive the truth, if you give her fair play.'

Judith proceeded with her questions with meek resolution:—

'Was not the sum you needed four thousand zechins? Were not two thousand to be paid to the legate, and two thousand to the Italian prelate, on the thirtieth day of June last? Was not this just before you were made an abbot? Did you not tell my father that if you could not obtain the money you would lose advantages you had been seeking for thirty years? That if he would not supply it, a terrible crime—meaning, I suppose, the crucifixion of Sir Hugh—should be charged against him and his daughter, from whose fatal consequences it would be impossible to escape? but that if he gave you the money, he and his house should be saved by your secret aid?'

'Tis false as—'

'Hold man!' interrupted Bishop Grosteste. 'By the king's leave I will ask you why, if not to extort money from him, you took the merchant to the castle at all? The court must be informed that Jocenus came to me to seek protection for his daughter and himself against your threats and the late earl's. I was banqueting, and sent him to a room of mine to wait my leisure. He was crossing my courts when the drunken soldiery, whom the legate allowed his supporters to bring into this sacred building, nearly murdered him, for which they should afterwards have paid dearly had not my authority been some time kept under lock and key. You, unlike a religious man, and a man of knowledge, stooped to cover the saucy violence of the drunken barbarians, and to assist them to wrong a defenceless individual. You directed them to take the bleeding merchant to a dungeon of the castle. Now I ask why did you do that? and especially why did you do it secretly?—why did you make the soldiers swear on their swords to reveal nothing that had passed?—if, abbot, your intentions were not to extort money from Jocenus?'

'His grace having given me free liberty of speech, I will make bold to ask you, too, lord abbot,' said Judith, 'if you did not explain to my father at the time I have spoken of, the reasons of your animosity against him, and if they were not these—he had helped to spread a report that you had used the money left by the Lady Gant to advance yourself, and that the confessor had come unfairly to his end, therefore he was dangerous to you?'

'Legate, do you stand quietly here as the pope's delegate, while a consecrated abbot is thus shamefully brow-beaten by an impudent creature of lies, and murder, and every hell-born crime?' exclaimed the abbot, with blanched lips and passion-shaken frame.

The legate had reflected a great deal in a brief space. It was im-

litic to cling to a falling rock—he must shake the abbot off. By so doing, he might gain his own ends better. To the abbot's unutterable dismay, he said—

'Whatever league I have had with the prior of Icanno, lords, I beg you all to notice, has been intended for the benefit of those interests with which his highest holiness, Pope Innocent, entrusted me; but,' he emphasised the word and made an ominous pause, 'I herewith break that league until he prove the report false that he has made a perfidious use of the property entrusted to him by the Lady de Gant's confessor.'

'That is well, legate,' said the king, 'and it seemeth to us best that he cleanse his name from this blot, before we give ear to his statement of the crucifixion.'

Henry saw the queen much approved this decision, and the court applauded it. The abbot beheld himself surrounded with his enemies, and he stood like a tiger at bay. But rallying himself powerfully to grapple with his antagonists, he determined they should achieve no easy victory over him.

'The prior of Icanno, you said, legate!' he cried; 'there is no prior of that house here. I am the abbot of Crowland, and, by the relics of St. Edward, I will not deign a single word to the man who addresses me by other than that title.'

'You shall not hold that abbey,' returned the legate; 'I will force the monks to elect another abbot if you do not satisfy the Lord de Gant as to the disposal of his lady's money.'

'You are extremely zealous all at once for the knight, legate! you heard of this report long since, how is it you did not require me to answer it before you procured me the hand and seal of the pope to my settlement in Crowland?'

This was a question not to be explicitly replied to publicly without exposing transactions that were better concealed. The legate could only parry it by repeating—'Satisfy

the council that you have not wronged the Lord de Gant.'

'I will not!' proudly exclaimed the abbot. 'My lips are sealed on the subject, and no command short of the pope's shall unlock them! I know what is due to the station and office I hold. I would gladly have explained whatever seems mysterious in that affair,' he added, assuming an aspect of injured sincerity, 'I would have welcomed the severest scrutiny into my conduct with regard to it, if I had been treated here with the respect I had a right to anticipate. But thus scolded and threatened, as though I were a schoolboy, I will not satisfy you in the least. You may seek satisfaction from those who spread the report.'

This was a masterly experiment for avoiding the investigation he dreaded, and would have succeeded, perhaps, but for the sagacity of the queen, who incited King Henry to penetrate to the bottom of the mystery, and to unravel its complex windings. Bishop Grosteste now gave the assembly an accurate recapitulation of the testimonies that had been made before him and the prince privately, by Philip the ferryman, Aaron the Jew, and in particular, by Gesta. The abbot gnashed his teeth, bit his nether lip until the blood dropped on his chin, and, with the alarming frenzy of his eyes, threatened annihilation to these who had ruined him. Each witness repeated this testimony to the king, and bore the searching cross-examinations of the judges with unwavering steadiness. Truth was triumphant—the court was convinced.

Again, however, collecting himself with a strong effort, the abbot opposed subtlety and eloquence against plain facts. He made an elaborate defence and ridiculed the evidence that had been given, ending thus—

'And now where is this confessor? If the leech is to be credited, he left the hut of the rabbit-keepers alive. Nothing but his personal

appearance here should induce the council to offer me so gross an affront as to believe these lying slanderers! Nothing but—bah! God of mercy!'

'What seest thou?' demanded the king, rising from his throne in amazement.

The judges leaned forward in their seats to observe the abbot's horror-struck appearance; the prelates lifted their crucifixes, and signed themselves with the cross; the barons, bewildered, grasped their swords-sheaths, and with looks prepared to meet some terrible enemy, followed the direction of the abbot's frantic stare to the middle of the aisle.

There a sudden confusion had occurred—the hermit had thrown away his staff, and now stood upright as any man in the royal presence—his long white beard was in his hand, his face was closely shaven, and thus metamorphosed, he appeared only recently to have passed the prime of his days.

The queen was not at all disturbed—in truth she had been previously prepared for this denouement by the Lady Isabella.

The abbot's respiration was stifled in his throat, his face blackened, his eyeballs seemed staring from their sockets. Fully believing that the confessor was dead, and not having seen the hermit assume his proper stature and appearance, the first horrible impression he had, was, that the spirit of the murdered stood before him. At length he found a voice, and shrieked forth some incoherent sentences, then with a fearful cry fell prostrate on his face.

His attendant monks raised him, relieved him of his cumbersome robes, and made the hall ring with their cries for surgical assistance. Aaron pressed forward to him, felt his pulse, examined his countenance, held to his nose a rich essence case Judith had lent, then helping himself to an uncommonly large pinch of snuff, pronounced him 'not at all likely to die.'

A moment after, the abbot with-

ed in the arms of the monks, and sprang to his feet; perceiving himself divested of his splendid robes, he snatched them up from the silken covering of the pavement, and put them on with a demeanour expressive of defiance to all who wished to humble him. The confessor of the deceased Lady de Gant stood immediately before him. The momentary shock an evil conscience had caused him had passed; at once he comprehended that it was a corporeal figure he saw, and the appalling situation in which he was now placed fully revealed itself to his mind. He beheld himself hemmed in on every side by the terrible consequences of his crimes—no way of escape presented itself. Nevertheless in that fearful emergency, he took a firm stand, and, by his noble bearing made many regret that virtue and religion had lost in him a man so well formed by nature to be their champion.

The confessor's tale was soon told, and there was not a person present who did not listen to it with an interest so surpassing as never to be forgotten.

He attested Gesta's endeavour to save him from the friar who had been hired by the superior of Icanno to murder him, and confirmed all that the leech had said relative to the poisoned drink, and his escape from the rabbit-keeper's hut. He added, that he afterwards found shelter among a small community dwelling in the marshes, to whom he made his critical situation known. Intolerably anxious for the welfare of the helpless child whom he had left in the charge of the prior, he consulted with the brethren, and the hermit of Lincoln dying about that time, they assisted him to disguise himself, and take possession of the vacant hermitage. On his late journey with Lord Hugh to the town whither the abbot had subtly removed the merchant's daughter, in his character of hermit, they had stopped to dine with those brethren in the marshes, by whom he was of course known, but they faithfully kept his secret.

While in the hermitage, his sole earthly employment had been to watch over the dear child who had been left, as it seemed, an orphan, with no other protector than his powerless self. Seldom had a day of fine weather passed without his having met Sir Hugh and questioned him on the prior's treatment of him, or without his having informed his opening mind with principles of honour and piety. He had endeavoured to win the boy's love, and had succeeded: frequently did Sir Hugh throw by his hoop and ball, and forsake his playmates in the street, to sit and learn from the lonely dweller in the hermitage. If on any occasion the hermit found him longer absent than usual, he ventured to the vicinity of the priory, nor rested until he had seen the object of his anxiety; then, perhaps, sitting with him on the roots of an oak tree, or on a grassy bank at the borders of a meadow, or the river, the ancient-looking man, and the sweet child, conversed together uninterruptedly. Until within a short period of the knight's return from the Holy Land, Sir Hugh's complaints of the prior had been only trifling, at that time they so much increased in importance that the hermit had made up his mind to beg the bishop of Lincoln's interposition.

The knight's return, and the child's disappearance, immediately succeeded, and motives of prudence for all parties concerned had deterred him from exposing the wickedness of the man whom he looked upon as the real destroyer of Sir Hugh until the present moment.

The confessor was convinced the abbot had murdered the boy; his reasons were these:—when Sir Hugh was in the habit of visiting his hermitage, he was in the habit also of visiting the Jewess now accused of his death; the child dearly loved the merchant's beautiful daughter, and often described, with artless rapture, the good things she taught him. The confessor felt convinced that the woman who had so instruct-

ed him could not have committed so barbarous a deed.

Here the knight himself repeated, in confirmation of this opinion, what had passed between his child and him at their only meeting.

The confessor drew the inference from all that he and others had stated, that Judith was innocent, and that the abbot himself had committed the crime he charged upon her. The Lady Isabella now spoke earnestly to the queen, who had been attending to all that had passed with unbroken interest. Her grace immediately waved her hand as a sign that she wished to be heard.

'My lord,' she said, addressing herself to the king, 'let yon monk who stands below there, on the right, near the third window from the great entrance, be summoned hither—he will tell the court how the child died.'

'Aye—aye, my dear, Bishop Grosteste told me that he was possession of the key which unlocks the grand mystery. Officer, bring him near.'

'Sch!' muttered the abbot, 'all is over now! This is his errand here, is it? Blasts light on thee! thou viper whom I nurtured in my bosom! I took that fellow from beggary!—lodged him!—clothed him!—fed him!—taught him!—and sent him to a rich French priory with a recommendation to preferment! And this is his gratitude! Oh, that my foot were on his neck, and my hands on his throat! But hist—I may be too hasty—he may intend to save me, and to confound my foes! He dares not look at me—that is not well! But I will not be rash in my suspicions. Hah!—what says he! Torture and furies plague him for ever!—he has—he has destroyed me!'

And so indeed he had. He had avowed that in his early days he received great benefits from the abbot, which, lying on his mind, he had not possessed firmness enough to refuse rendering his assistance when it was required for dishonest

plans. It was with evident marks of distress that he thus exposed the man who had befriended him, and whom, he said with tears, he loved the best in the world.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

'YOUR gracious highness, when little Sir Hugh was first brought to Icanno, the prior often called me into his study, or his sleeping cell, to talk with me alone. He would say, 'I shall never be happy until I am the bishop of Lincoln's equal—either he must come down to my condition, or I must rise to his.' Then he would relate to me over and over all his acquaintance with the bishop, and how they had at one time been poor neighbour boys in Suffolk, and how they had risen together step by step, until the bishop got on faster than he. I loved the prior, and thought no man in Christendom had more capacity or learning than himself. I was sorry to see him shut up in a little place like Icanno without opportunity for showing his abilities. I thought it very hard he should be overlooked as he was, while so many priests of duller wit, and narrower intellects, were raised to large benefices.'

'Proceed to the matter in hand,' cried the legate, than whom there was none now more eager for the consummation of the abbot's ruin. 'What of the crucifixion?'

'Let him have time, brother cardinal,' remonstrated Bishop Grosteste; 'we are all men, and all partake, it is most likely, of the infirmities which have marred the brightness of this abbot's mind.'

This noble remark penetrated the abbot's soul, coming at a moment when he was so bitterly stung by the perfidy of his former despicable ally, the legate. The monk continued—

'The Lady de Gant's confessor was then in the priory, but soon after the prior told me that he (the confessor) intended to go in search of Lord Hugh, who, he had heard, was still alive in Palestine. The

confessor went, and I saw a great change in the prior. He often looked hard at me, as if he wanted to say something particular, but was afraid. At times he would begin to speak of a certain secret, then break off, and tell me it was nothing of consequence. I slept in the next cell, and often heard him pacing the gallery in the dead of night when all the brethren were sleeping. On one of these occasions I could not refrain from going to him, and begging him to tell me what preyed so much on his mind. His cell door stood partly open, and I saw a chest full of money on the floor, with the lid thrown back, by the side of an opening near the hearth whence a plank had been taken up. He saw that I had observed it, and, catching me by the shoulder, he drew me into the cell and fastened the door. I begged him not to harm me, for I had perceived a poinard in his hand, and assured him that I loved him, and would keep any secret with which he might entrust me. He threw the poinard away directly, and said to me, 'I cannot trust you with all that oppresses me, but learn thus much, that money before you belongs to Sir Hugh, the confessor has left it in my charge for him, he is to have it when he is old enough to choose his profession, supposing that the confessor dies abroad, and that Lord Hugh is heard of no more. Now, Eric, with a sum such as this, I could make myself a way out of my ignoble obscurity, and afterwards repay the young heir with interest. I know what you would say, there is danger in the scheme, and it is not strictly honest; but these are mere wordy scruples, which my great need cannot listen to. I must have the present use of the money, and you must help me to turn it quickly to account. Friend Eric, I know you will not abuse my confidence, I know you will help me; and, by the relics of St. Edward! I promise that if I rise, you shall rise too!'

'I told him I had neither abilities

nor desire for any station higher than that of a plain monk, which I held, I was happy and contented, and wished to remain where I was, and as I was. To him I owed the comforts I possessed, and all I wished now was to be useful to him in some humble way.

'The next week he sent me to the legate with a rich present and a letter, and after that to the archbishop of Canterbury, also with a present and letter. Many questions were put to me by each about the talents of the prior, who were his chief friends, how he spent his time, and such like. I extolled him as my heart dictated, and returned to Icanno with invitations that he would visit both of them, which he did. Well, your highnesses, after this the prior told me that Sir Hugh's money was gone, and he must have more, or all he had done would be of no service to him. He was to have the abbey of Crowland through the influence of the legate and archbishop, but had to raise four thousand zecchins before he could be installed. 'And what think you, Eric?' said he to me, 'Lord Hugh is in Lincoln, he has not met with the confessor, and I shall be obliged to make him suppose that the father took the money with him, and was robbed and murdered. You must strengthen the brethren's belief of this.' He saw my mind was burthened and distressed about the affair, and tried to cheer me. 'As soon as ever I am installed,' said he, 'I will send for Lord Hugh, open my heart to him, and return him all his money, with more to it, only do you assist me out of the present emergency.' I could not deny him, though my soul revolted from the falsehood which I spread.

'He was absent from that afternoon mass; about dusk he came back; I was weeding alone in the flower-garden; he spoke to me in a very agitated way. 'Eric, you must come with me, I want to know where Lord Hugh is lodging, and you must help me to discover.' I went.

with him into the High-street, not at all satisfied with his looks. He was pale, and his eyes had such a strange expression that I trembled when they turned on me. We walked up and down the High-street, and as the wind lifted his black cloak I saw the same poinard in the girdle of his cassock which I had feared before. 'Why do you shrink from me, Eric?' said he. I told him why. He laughed—but I liked his laugh worse than anything else. I begged him to remember that it was nearly time for evening prayers, the brethren would wonder at our absence. 'You are a fool,' said he; 'what are the brethren to me? I hope I have nearly done with them. Attend—I am going to put my life in your hands, and now I shall know whether the gratitude and love you have long talked about is counterfeit or genuine. Do not shake nor cry out while I tell you—I am seeking the death of the crusader. Eric, I have entangled myself in a dismal labyrinth. I have had no rest in my mind lately, and now what would become of all the hopes that I live for if it be once known that I have made use of the knight's money? There is but one way to make me secure—Lord Hugh must die.' I besought him for his soul's sake to shake off an idea so horrible, and showed him that it had been instigated by the great enemy of souls, who was a murderer from the beginning. A knight in a crusader's hat and cloak then passed us, and the prior drew me on to follow him. We proceeded together to the Jew's quarter, where we stood opposite the garden wall of Jocenus the merchant, while the knight went into the garden by a private door. I whispered to the prior, 'for the Almighty's sake consider what you intend to do! Remember Cain's punishment!' He saw I looked terrified. 'Will you betray me?' he asked. I answered, 'I had rather perish!' And so, your gracious highnesses, I would rather have done than have stood here now to injure him. But

it is my duty to save the innocent from suffering unjustly. I could not let the Jewish lady die as the crucifier of Sir Hugh, while I know her to be as clear of that crime as a babe unborn.'

'Well, well,' cried the king, impatient at the monk's tediousness, 'you went into the garden I suppose with the prior, and what happened there?—that is what the council seek to know.'

'No, your highness, I did not go in with him, he left me outside, and said he would join me presently, and so he did. 'What has become of him?' I inquired, meaning the knight. 'He is safe enough,' he answered, 'and so I mean to leave him. Your arguments have convinced me, Eric, I will not be driven on by the devil to ruin my soul.' I was glad enough to hear this. 'But Eric,' said he, 'I am afraid the knight's child has been in the merchant's house this afternoon, and some mischief has lighted on him. There is a well just within the garden, and I am much deceived if his body does not lie at the bottom.' 'God and Holy Mary forbid!' I cried. We went to the well; I looked down; the moon was shining very bright, and I caught a glimpse of Sir Hugh's little silver bugle, and the coat I had seen him wear that morning. The sight gave me a sore turn. 'Let us try to raise it with the windlass,' said the prior, 'there is a strong hook to it.' I wanted to get a light from the house, but he would not suffer me. I turned the windlass; the rope with the hook at the end went down into the water; the hook caught in the child's clothes, and we brought him up, after one failure, to the brim. The prior directly took off his cloak and wrapt the body in it; but I can aver, as I hope to be saved, that the hands and feet were then as sound as mine. There had been no nails driven through them then. And upon the truth of this, I am willing to stake soul and body. I saw his hands as plain as I now see my own. When first we took him out of the

water his little Spanish leather shoes were on his feet, but as the cloak was wrapped about him, I pulled them off, and there was not a mark or wound upon either.'

'This is sufficient,' said the king, rising. 'The Jewess is free!'

Applause, general and unequivocal, responded to Henry's decision. The queen whispered her satisfaction to the Lady Isabella, and to her consort, while most of the churchmen present audibly confirmed the royal decree.

'Your signet ring, my lord abbot!' cried the king, addressing him authoritatively.

'I will not yield it save by the pope's command!' was the determined reply.

'That command you receive from me,' exclaimed the legate.

'My dismissal from the abbey of Crowland must come from his holiness direct, I will not receive it from any second person!' returned the abbot, loftily. 'The signet of my office I will not yield to any but him, though it were demanded from me by one twenty times a king!'

Here Henry whispered to a lord in waiting, who passed some secret order to the serjeant-at-arms. Immediately a guard of twelve soldiers made their appearance at the upper end of the hall, and the abbot found himself under arrest.

Then, every latent hope of retaining the dignity he had purchased at so costly a sacrifice as the ruin of his conscience, indeed faded away. 'The witch prophesied truly,' he mentally ejaculated; 'the lofty tree must as suddenly wither, as it suddenly flourished! In the middle of a glorious summer day, the thunder-bolt has lighted upon me! Lady Isabella's warnings were not without foundation. But if I sink, I will sink nobly! My mean foes shall see me calm and undaunted in the midst of ruin!'

That which pierced him most in this unlooked for reverse was the perfidious desertion of those whom he had regarded as his friends. They

all stood aloof from him now. No voice of theirs was uplifted to the king on his behalf. No sympathizing look, or friendly pressure of the hand, offered to console him. Alone and friendless he stood in his disgrace; and none were more ready to heap humiliation upon him than they who before had helped to intoxicate him with pride and flattery.

One voice, however, was heard to plead for him; it was that of his former enemy, the object of his envy, the man whom he had sought to supplant—Bishop Grosteste. This truly excellent prelate most generously sought to win the royal clemency for him. He drew a lively sketch of the prior's life and character in its most favourable points of view, and concluded thus—

'He is now in the prime of his days. Experience has taught him sharp and wholesome lessons. If your grace restores him to your favour, and permits him to return to his former priory of Icanno until something better is found for him, which his learning and chastened life may deserve, he may yet prove to you, to the church, and the people, a blessing instead of a curse.'

'No, my lord bishop,' returned Henry, tartly, with angry looks, 'he has set our authority at defiance by refusing to yield the signet ring of Crowland to us, he shall therefore hie to prison, and there lodge until our council and the legate's synod, which are to be holden to-morrow, have decided upon his punishment.'

'Your grace had better consider again before you so publicly disgrace him,' persevered Grosteste. 'If I do not err, he will well repay any graciousness you may be pleased to show him in this his extremity.'

'Let him betake himself to Icanno then, and there abide our pleasure,' decided Henry, after a whispered conference with his queen.

'These guards will be unnecessary,' persisted Grosteste. 'I will be answerable for the abbot's appearance before the council or the synod at any hour.'

Henry again whispered with his queen.

'What makes *you* so earnest on the abbot's behalf now, who were before his most bitter enemy?' asked the legate, rancorously.

'Because I see those who were before his friends now turned to be his enemies!' retorted Grosteste, bluntly. 'When the lion in the fable was dying, brother, all the meaner animals ill-treated him, and even the ass kicked up his heels against the noble brute. Something like this has happened now. By the rood! I believe that this stricken man, with all his vices, hath owned a nobler spirit than can be boasted of by any of you, who were obsequious to him in his prosperity, but are now trampling on him in his adversity.'

'Bishop,' said the king, 'we hold your counsel in much esteem; and therefore, though contrary to our previous intentions, the abbot may retire with his own attendants to Icanno.'

Pre-eminently self-possessed, and dignified even to majesty, the abbot listened to this parley between the bishop and the king. When it was concluded, he signed to his attendants, and turned to withdraw.

Stopping short, however, he looked toward the Lady Isabella, who leaned on the queen's throne; she gave him a look so kind, so sad, that he felt almost unmanned by it. Involuntarily he returned it by a smile more proud, but as sad, as kind, as her look. Apparently the feelings of the canoness were too highly wrought by the scene she had witnessed to bear this, for a moment after she leaned on the arm of one of the queen's ladies, hysterically weeping, and was thus led out of the hall.

The abbot stood motionless until she had departed; then his eye wandered to her brother, who was distinguished from the group of splendid churchmen around him by his simple attire.

'My lord bishop,' said he, and there was something of pathos as well as of pride in his tone, 'you have not erred in your appreciation

of my character. *I may* yet live to put my enemies to shame! Of one thing be certain, whether or no experience has taught me the difference between a true and a false ambition, it has certainly taught me the difference between a true and a false friend.'

He looked pointedly on the legate, and then with an air of grandeur slowly proceeded down the hall.

As he was mounting his horse outside the palace, Eric, the monk who had been the principal means of his degradation, rushed from the portal, and fell on his knees with streaming eyes.

'My dear lord abbot, pardon me,' he pathetically entreated.

'I may have reason to *thank* you, Eric,' returned the abbot.

'I could not let the Jewess die unjustly,' argued the monk. 'O my dear lord abbot! I would not have betrayed you, only it was to save an innocent woman.'

'I believe thee, Eric, truly I believe thee! Follow me to Icanno. Perhaps, my good friend, it would have been better had I never quitted those tranquil though humble shades. Come, methinks I feel lighter in heart already, for now the worst is known, and I have no longer anything to fear in this world.'

The little cavalcade (and it was a *little* one compared with that the abbot had exhibited when he *went* to the hall, many of those who were then proud to be in his train having fallen from him since) pushed on at a round pace to the Monk's Lane, in which they moved more slowly, the abbot pausing to enjoy with a new interest the pleasant country around.

The shadowless splendour of the noon-day sun rested on high-sloping meadows and woods, and on the sweetly pastoral neighbourhood of Icanno backed by hills of forest and heath. The calmly flowing river, when seen through the groves that bordered it, appeared steeped in the same all-pervading splendour. The heavens were deeply, brightly blue,

without a cloud—unless those large birds, which float so high upon the air, apparently without a motion of their own, may be mistaken for such.

The abbot had lost his relish for the beauties and grandeur of nature while possessed by the demon of ambition. But now he awoke again to purer tastes and feelings. He compared the magnificence of creation with that of human pomp; and despised his own littleness of soul in having so fondly prized the latter, while the former had been disregarded.

'Poor trappings!' he mentally exclaimed, glancing at his superb robes, 'for ye I have bartered peace and self-approbation! Well, I will be a child no longer! presently I will lay ye on one side, and have done with ye for ever!'

The humble monastery now came into view; and a low stone wall rose behind the bushes of a sweet-smelling hedge on the right. A wooden door admitted them through this wall; and then a scene was before them so suited to the indulgence of the abbot's softened feelings that he stopped, and sent his few attendants forward to prepare the brethren for his arrival, while he proceeded on foot through one of the many peaceful walks that invited his melancholy eye.

The sod was grassy, and bordered with many beautiful plants peculiar to the county; but not on these he gazed now; while with downcast looks he mused. His mental eye was busily scanning the world within, and outward vision was for a time suspended. Presently he heaved a deep groan, spread his hand over his face, and sat down under a sycamore tree. When he withdrew his hand there glistened a *tear* in his eye, the dewy harbinger of a morn of virtue rising above the midnight of his soul.

Leaning back on the root of the tree, he looked up through the maze of branches and murmuring leaves to the fragments of celestial ether seen through their openings; and as now and then a bird floated in the

luxuriance of perfect ease between that ether and him, new conceptions of a contemplative existence, remote from the strife of cities, the flattery and falsehood of courts, and the specious shows of church dignities, were kindled in his mind. Looking about him, and listening with his imagination all awake, he felt these delightful conceptions acquire new vividness. The birds hopping on his path, or chirping and warbling on the bough; the tinkling of bells on the necks of cattle in the pastures near; the bleating of distant sheep; the barking of a shepherd's dog still more distant; the low rustling of faint breezes in the trees; all presented to him ideas of peace and purity, such as he might henceforth possess without alloy.

'I will be happy in retirement,' said he aloud. 'The world has justly cast me out—nature shall now receive me. O calm groves! O silent meadows! O shadowy paths! I take up my lot once more among you; and now I can value you more than ever I did before. O retired cloisters!—retired alike from the notice and love of the world—I return to hide my shame and disappointment in your sacred boundaries, from which I will never more depart.'

His mournful reveries were broken by the present superior of the monastery, who came with two monks to usher him to the house.

They made lowly reverences to him, and addressed him with studied respect.

'Nay—nay, good prior!' said the abbot, 'I am come to you as a poor brother who has many sins to repent of, and much just scorn, and some ingratitude to endure. Receive me with no formality. Let me have my old cell, and let Eric serve me there, and God requite you for giving me a shelter in my need.'

The superior was much moved by the late proud abbot's humbled deportment, and when they were in the monastery held a long and solemn conversation with him.

Later in the day, Lady Isabella came to Icanno, desiring a private

conference with the abbot. He joined her, and they walked in silence to the banks of a limpid stream that turned the priory mill. Here the veiled canoness seated herself on a flowery hillock, while the abbot leaned against a tree trunk. For a minute they seemed to be intent only upon the pleasing prospect before them, and on the smooth current that, dimpled by a light breeze, was softly flowing at their feet.

The lady was the first to speak; but before she uttered a word, she pressed the abbot's hand as it hung by his side, and looked up with much emotion in his face.

'Robert!' she then anxiously ejaculated, 'my friend how is it with thee now? Thy wild hopes are all defeated; thou art openly disgraced, that of which I warned thee has come upon thee; tell me how thy mind bears up beneath the shock.'

'I was never so well in my life as at this moment, Isabella,' replied the abbot, with a smile serene though sad; 'and by God's grace, and with the aid of these sweet haunts for contemplation, I shall yet be better.'

'What do you say, Robert!' exclaimed the canoness, joining her hands together in joyful amazement. 'Are you indeed likely to be made better by your fate?'

'I believe I am,' returned the abbot, with great seriousness. 'After the first fierce tumult of my disgrace had subsided, and I had left the royal presence, a light broke in on me which showed me how little that was worth pursuing which I had been pursuing, and how much happiness I had flung away. Then when I beheld once more this beautiful and peaceful I canno, it prompted me to fancy, that guilty as I have been, I might still find happiness by devoting myself to a life of penitence, devotion, and benevolent deeds within its hallowed circle.'

Blessed thought! exclaimed Lady Isabella, 'inspired by Heaven itself! Never did I hope to hear you speak thus. Robert, my orisons have been unweariedly offered up on your behalf, but I had almost ceased to look for an answer to them.'

'Still let them rise for me, Isabella, I shall still need them. And now this is our last meeting on earth!'

'Must it be our last?' faltered the canoness.

'It *must*,' replied the Abbot firmly, but sorrowfully, 'for our peace sake! Many years have we loved each other unsuspected of others; purely, deeply, have we not?'

'I have so loved you, Robert!' was the almost inaudible reply.

'And I you, Isabella! Perhaps this restless, hopeless, and considering my religious vows, sacrilegious passion, has been one principal means of plunging me in crime. We may not marry, and we must not meet again.'

He paced the bank when he had so spoken, while Lady Isabella drooped her head on her breast.

'You will have no need to keep a watch on my proceedings hereafter, dear Isabella!' he resumed. 'I pledge my soul to you that I will no more enter into the world to seek its honours or its profits. You must think of me as departed to my eternal rest.'

The anguish of Lady Isabella here became so acute and over-powering that it seemed to threaten life itself. The abbot threw himself by her side on the grass, and, tenderly embracing her, endeavoured by his arguments, to strengthen and fortify her mind for the lasting separation.

'To see you no more, Robert!' she gasped; 'now that you are so like your former self—so like what you were when thou and I were young! Oh, it is too bitter! So many years have I sorrowed for your evil practices, and now that they are to be given up, I am never to enjoy your society again! I cannot, cannot bear it! I only desire to see you occasionally, and in this I must not be denied.'

'You shall not, beloved Isabella! my early, only love!' ejaculated the abbot, tears in his eyes, and melancholly passion in his gestures. 'You are dear to my soul! I will not press

the point; let our intercourse remain as heretofore. Occasionally we will meet and converse on bygone blissful remembrances, and haply of those blessed climes beyond the grave were nothing shall interpose to sever souls united like ours.'

'No! Robert, no!' murmured the canoness, called to a sense of duty, and making an ineffectual effort to rise from his encircling arm. 'Your love for me you say has been a source of evil to you. It must not be so again. I will not throw any obstacle in the way of your entire dedication to the church. Here we separate to meet no more!'

The abbot was silent, only he strained her closer to him, and gazed long and mournfully on her faded features.

'This face of thine, Isabella,' said he, 'has lost its beauty to the world, but to me it is lovely as an angel's! I here see all that is amiable in woman changed to pining sorrow by an unfortunate affection for my misguided self, whom vows that cannot be recalled alone prevent from openly returning it.'

And then abandoned to the luxury of woe, they mingled their tears together, whilst the rugged scream of the owl, and the mouse-like cry of the bat, flapping its wide leathern wings in its course through the twilight atmosphere, intimated the approach of night.

They arose from the bank, the lady drawing her veil over her face with her left hand, while the right was still retained in the abbot's ardent grasp.

'Now—now adieu, Robert! for ever—for ever adieu!' exclaimed she.

'One last—last embrace!' tremulously articulated the abbot; and again she was locked in his arms.

It was but for one single moment however, the next they had parted. She went forward a few yards, turned, waved her hand, and passed on.

He watched her until she had disappeared behind the trees that intervened between the mill and the

monastery, then seated himself once more on the bank, with an air of calm but profound sorrow.

Not until he felt assured that Lady Isabella and her attendants had left the priory did he rise from his meditative posture and return to the house.

On reaching there he found the bishop, accompanied only by his chaplain, ready to condole with him on the change in his fortunes, to assist him in improving it to his soul's advantage, and to serve him in any honourable way.

When Grosteste heard the happy change of sentiments the abbot had experienced he expressed his delight in strong terms.

The abbot made to him a minute confession of all his ill deeds, and of all his corrupt designs; nothing was concealed from the bishop, who made his wholesome comments on different points with the freeness and faithfulness belonged to his character.

'And now to you I entrust this ring of my office, as head of the Abbey of Crowland,' said the abbot. 'I have no desire to retain it longer, my fever of ambition is cured. I am determined to dedicate myself by a solemn vow to a life of penitence and solitude in this priory.'

CHAPTER XL.

LEONI had remained with the merchant in Myrza's tower up to the time of Judith's acquittal. She had not seen her father since she was brought back to Lincoln by her guards, for Leoni, Gesta, and the knight, mutually determined to keep him in ignorance of her arrival. To this they were incited by two motives; one, the wish of sparing Judith the pain of discovering her father's disordered mental state; the other, the desire of sparing Jocenus those dreadful alternations of hope and fear which he would have suffered had he been sensible of the near approach of the last crisis of his daughter's fate.

But the concealment proved to be one of unfortunate consequences.

While Judith was still before the king, Jocenus overheard the Jewish labourers speaking in the adjoining room of the probable termination of her trial. Listening with frenzied impatience, he soon understood all that Judith had undergone in the distant town to which she had been conveyed; that she had been brought back to Lincoln to receive her doom from the lips of royalty; and that at this present moment she was before her accusers and her regal judge in the grand hall of the palace of the Bishop of Lincoln.

At once he started from his posture of listless melancholy in which he had almost constantly remained since first taking refuge in this lonely building of ill report. He caught up his soiled turban, and pressing it on his head, heedless in what manner; then calling on Sylvio to follow him, passed, with eager desperation in his swift motions, down the winding staircase of the tower to the river side.

Here he paced the bank, impatiently waiting for the appearance of a boatman on the water who might ferry him across. One not immediately coming into view, he grasped with fierce impatience his ebon beard, which was now ragged and entangled, and stamped violently on the ground. Sylvio barked with might as he perceived these signs of tumultuous wrath in his master, and looked about apparently for the cause of Jocenus' excitement.

'A boat! a boat!' shouted the noble Hebrew, and the courteous wind conveyed the vehement call to a boatman who, seated in a small pleasure wherry, was gliding indolently along the surface of the current. The man returned a hail importing his willingness to give him a seat. Jocenus sprang in, his greyhound following, and the boatman, catching up his oar, swiftly impelling the wherry toward the city whither the merchant pointed.

The man knew Jocenus well, and was acquainted with the story of his misfortunes, though he had not seen

him personally since the days of his prosperity; he now therefore looked at him with much curiosity mingled with pity. But the merchant evinced no wish for sympathy or for conversation, and the waterman, after addressing him twice in tones of kindness without receiving any rejoinder, felt chilled into silence. The neglected appearance of the once polished Hebrew's person then drew his attention. The tunic soiled, rent, and creased, as though it had been the owner's night-garment; the Spanish boots dirty, and their fur tops drooping half unstitched to the instep; the matted hair and beard; the haggard paleness of the once rich, though swarthy complexion; the fearful rolling of the eye, in which *madness* mingled with misery; the clenched teeth; the spacious forehead ploughed with the lines of extreme suffering, and clouded with tempestuous passion; all this the boatman noticed with an inquisitive eye, as he plyed his oar.

When the wherry stopped at the foot of the bridgestairs, the merchant leaped out with his dog, forgetful of the fare he had to pay. The boatman hereupon touched his hat, and, with respect, enkindled by sincere friendliness of feeling for the unhappy Hebrew, named his charge.

Jocenus turned upon him a bewildered stare, and, wildly impatient of being delayed a moment, felt about him for the necessary coins. Not one was to be found. The boatman was as little fitted for a dupe as may be; yet having more than a guess of the errand the merchant was upon, he could not bear to detain him in his present wretched state, and accordingly pushed off from the stairs, with a hearty, 'Never mind, master Jew, you shall pay me when we meet again, if your daughter gets clear of that matter about the crucifixion of the child, as some people seem to think she will. If she does not, I shan't be the worst for having given you a sail gratis; you have served many a

man in your day, Christian as well as infidel.'

'Stay, Nazarene!' cried Jocenus, twitching his turban from his head, and throwing it into the trim vessel, with a hand shaking as if under palsy. 'There are jewels on that, keep them for thy pains!' And immediately he ascended the bridge stairs, and made towards the palace bareheaded.

The waterman eyed the turban with looks of astonishment and delight. Three jewels he counted thereon, each of a costly quality, though small.

'This is a lucky day,' said he to himself. 'The poor Jew knew not what he was about; he has gone bareheaded all through the town. I see the clouds are dropping with rain, I have half a mind to run after him and return the turban with its shining stones. Yet 'tis too tempting a prize—I think I must even keep it.'

So gain conquered generosity, and Jocenus strode up the billy street of the strait, without a turban.

Many who had known him in better days recognized him as he went, some shuddered as they marked his frenzied visage; some passed by on the other side as though strangers to him, and when his back was turned paused to look after him, observing that his hair had grown almost grey; some shrank from the sight of him with horror and hatred in their countenance, while their tongues poured forth such exclamations as 'Go and see your pompous sorceress of a daughter brought out to the stake, you murderous infidel!—go and see her receive her deserts for crucifying a baptized child!'

But the merchant was as little moved by the contumely as by the sympathy of his former acquaintances. He heeded not the groans or the opprobrious epithets that rang in his ear in the neighbourhood where lay the ruins of his once happy mansion; and he was insensible to the tearful eyes of the Jewish friends who looked on him here and

there from doors and lattices, although they durst not greet him in any audible manner. Many an one of those Jewish persons had he been the means of rescuing from persecution; some owed their very existence at present to his influence; and *all*, without exception, had received from him benefits of some kind or other.

Ingratitude was not an inhabitant of their breasts at this time. Their feelings were deep, and their distress acute, when beholding the mournful spectacle of their benefactor's altered appearance, as, steeped in desolation, in despair, and cruel uncertainty of his daughter's doom, he trod the streets that led to that door of the palace communicating with the grand hall, his bald crown exposed to the now fast descending summer shower.

Arrived there, he demanded admittance. This of course was refused, with an inquiry as to who he was, though the identity was easily surmised.

'I am Jocenus, the father of the Jewess now before the king,' was the reply.

'Then there is good news for you,' returned the other. 'Your daughter is proclaimed guiltless. The abbot of Crowland has maligned her and you, and is sent back to the priory of Icanno to mend his ways.'

The merchant staggered back, as if struck by a thunderbolt—his eyes distended—his mouth open.

'What—what did you say?' he gasped.

'That your daughter is free,' was the rejoinder. 'She approaches, I believe; she was in the eastern court an instant ago. Yes, here she is.'

Judith came leaning, faint with the agitation of joy, upon the arm of Gesta. Lord Hugh's white plumes were seen behind. At the sight of her father, she uttered a cry, and rushing forward, sank into his arms with glad tears, regardless in that thrilling moment of the observing bystanders.

But the shock of joy had been too

sudden and powerful for the merchant in his present unnerved condition, and instead of returning his daughter's tenderness, he fell insensible upon the earth. Judith looked with alarm in his beloved countenance; alas! it inspired a shrinking, awe-struck feeling. The jaw had dropped, the eye had glazed, the expression of frantic joy had vanished, and the stillness and passionless placidity of *death* was there in its stead. Judith understood at once what had happened, she knew that she was *alone* now in the world; and, overcome by the mighty transitions of feeling she had experienced during the last hour—transitions from a state of wretched suspense to that of triumphant, joyful security; and from melting rapture at meeting with the parent from whom she had been so long and hopelessly parted, to grief over that parent's corpse—she felt incapable of enduring more, and looking once to heaven, and once on the body at her feet, drew a deep breath and fainted.

This new and dire calamity almost annihilated Gesta. At a loss whether he should convey the apparently equally lifeless father and daughter, he looked about him in agonized perplexity. The crusader, too, was inexpressibly shocked by the sad catastrophe, and was scarcely competent to offer any advice to Gesta in the dilemma that presented itself. Leoni, who also stepped up to the spot, experienced similar dismay, and similar barrenness of expedient for the present accommodation of the ill-fated pair. A crowd of motley variety speedily collected around; but being all Christians, their deep-seated prejudices against the Hebrew nation in general, and latterly against Jocenus and his daughter in particular, deterred them from assisting in the least to remove the difficulty under which the merchant's three friends laboured.

'There is a hostelry near,' at length recollected Gesta, as kneeling on one knee he transferred the beauteous head of Judith from her

father's breast to his own. 'Let us bear them thither.'

'Not so, by St. Mary!' interposed the master of that hostelry, who stood by. 'I will have no Jews or Jewesses under my roof. I have had ill spirits enough in it once, I do not want them a second time. Every room of mine was exorcised by a priest a month ago, and not a little in meat and malt did I lose by the affair.'

'My dear master and mistress!' screamed Belaset, rushing forward from the palace court to the scene of sorrow. 'O my dear master and mistress! are not your troubles yet over?'

'The merchant is *dead*, Belaset,' said Gesta, hoarsely, 'sudden joy has killed him.' Belaset paused, with arms upraised, by the prostrate pair.

'O no—no! it cannot be!' she ejaculated, turning pale as death, and shrinking back.

'Observe his face,' said Gesta, in the same deep tone.

Belaset *did* observe it; and turning away, hid her face in her hands with loud sobs and cries.

'Make way for my Lady Gros-teste,' cried some person in the crowd. All fell back with deference as the distinguished canoness emerged from the gate and walked close to the spot where her young and lovely Hebrew friend had apparently closed so tragically the drama of her troubled history.

'What!' she falteringly articulated, throwing back her veil, 'Judith and her father *dead*!'

'The merchant is dead, lady,' said the knight, 'the sudden intelligence of his daughter's freedom deprived him of life, but we trust that she herself has only fainted. We are perplexed whither to convey them, for the knowledge of their innocence has yet scarcely spread beyond these palace walls, and no one will open a door to receive them.'

'They shall be taken into the palace,' said the lady.

'Fly!' she cried, turning to her page. 'Fetch a hand-litter, and

bring some of the bishop's serving men.

The page obeyed with alacrity, and the merchant's body, stretched on the litter, was borne on the shoulders of the bishop's servants to a room in that part of the extensive fabric appropriated to the use of the Lady Isabella.

Judith partially recovered as soon as she was raised from the ground, and, perceiving Belaset and the noble Christian lady to whom chiefly she owed her liberty, gave her hand to the former, and fell at the feet of the latter, unable to weep, but heaving convulsive sighs, such as threatened at once to shatter her delicately-moulded frame.

Lady Isabella instantly assisted her to rise, and begged that she would lean upon her arm, for indeed Judith was now incapable of supporting herself without aid.

'My Lord of Gant, and you, Sir Gesta,' said the canoness, 'may wait upon us to my apartments, if it so please you.'

'Gesta,' said Leoni, wringing his hand at parting. 'I shall return directly to Myrza's tower, there do you come as speedily as you can, and let me know how Judith does, and how I am to dispose of the merchant's goods that are there.'

'I will,' briefly returned Gesta, returning the friendly pressure with much emotion. 'And you will endeavour to ascertain in the meantime how Jocenus became acquainted with what was passing in the palace to-day, and why the labourers permitted him to come forth alone.'

'Certainly,' returned Leoni; 'and now, Gesta, I shall shortly prepare for a removal to another land, since England has no longer either profit, security, or happiness for me.'

Aaron, the leech, tried his skill in vain upon the inanimate merchant. Judith, indeed, hoped nothing from his exertions, but looked on in mute agony. This bereavement was the first her matured life had known; it had happened in a moment when she was peculiarly ill prepared for calamity. The peculiar union of

heart and mind that had ever subsisted between herself and her father too rendered his loss one of the bitterest and most irreparable. Nevertheless, her pangs were only expressed in the marble paleness of her seraphic countenance, in the rigidity of her figure, and in the occasional moaning sigh.

She remained with the body day and night. The tender remonstrances of Lady Isabella, and the earnest entreaties of Gesta and the crusader all failed to draw her from it even for an hour. Like a fair statue she sat silently gazing on the calm and dignified features in the unfortunate merchant, or when left alone, embracing his cold remains in the delirium of despair.

As soon as it became known to those Hebrews who remained in the Jew's quarter, braving the deadly persecution which raged by fits against their nation in Lincoln and the adjoining parts, that Jocenus was dead, they came in a body to the palace to beg that his body might be delivered to them, in order to be interred according to their own rites of burial. Their wish was granted them at once, and the deceased merchant was then borne to the temporary synagogue that had been hastily erected in the room of that the Christians had destroyed, surrounded by a great concourse of mourners, more sincere than usually attend the obsequies of those who have been called great.

Judith, arrayed in the mourning habit peculiar to her people, her face veiled, followed close after the bier, leaning on the arm of Gesta, then came Belaset and Leoni.

In front went four celebrated rabbins distinguished for their learning, and as they went, they chanted a Hebrew dirge, in which the people occasionally joined. The high priest of the English Jews attended in his robes as a special mourner for the man who had been so great an ornament, and so zealous a benefactor, to the Hebrew nation. Even the Christians remarked, as the sad procession moved along the streets of

the Jew's quarter, that 'There went to his long home, the best of the infidels !'

As for the infidels themselves, they had indeed cause for grief. Their position in Catholic England was at the present moment truly appalling ; and now Jocenus had departed, they knew not where to look for a friend able or willing to undertake their cause in the high places of the land. They had hoped he would have been reinstated in his former golden seat of prosperity and influence ; now all was over in this quarter, and nothing remained for tens of thousands, but to die by their own hand, to perish beneath the cruelties of the Christians, or to fly to another clime. Yet whither could they fly ? France, Spain, Italy, every civilized country would spurn them, and oppose them as England did. Beneath the Heavens they could discern no single spot where the sole of their wearied foot might find rest. The curse of God pursued them everywhere.

Such considerations might have swelled the burst of bitter lamentation with which they deposited his remains in the tomb they had prepared. That tomb was placed over the spot where his wife lay, in the extensive grounds that had formerly been his magnificent garden. All here exhibited the ravages of the spoiler. The trees, parterres, and walks were blackened and defaced with traces of fire. The walls and terraces were partly broken down. Fragments of grottos, arbours, seats, stands, and statues lay scattered about the soil. But Judith regarded not the melancholy spectacle, her father's death was a calamity so unspeakably great, that every other vanished into nothingness before it. She raised her heavy eyes, looking for the alabaster monument that had been erected to the memory of her mother, which was connected with all her tenderest memories ; it was gone ; and she knew by the situation of some poplars near, that the Jews had placed her father's tomb on the spot where it had stood. The ar-

rangements gave her a mournful satisfaction, and she murmured a word or two to Gesta, expressive of this feeling.

'The rabbins thought the synagogue should be the place chosen,' said he ; 'but my voice prevailed with them in favour of this spot.'

The night was clear and still, and the torches that were lowered over the cavity in which the open coffin now rested burnt with steady brightness. A rich silver lamp, filled with consecrated oil that gave forth a delicious odour, was placed at the head of the coffin, and a corresponding one at the foot ; while the high priest made an oration in honour of the deceased, and then performed the usual ceremonies. The grave was shallow, and lined with marble. The body was embalmed, and dressed in splendid oriental robes. The jet black beard once more flowed in glossy waves down to the waist, and added to the majesty of his countenance, which was partially shadowed by a large shawl turban in graceful rolls, and of brilliant hues. The dress was so complete that not even the silver ink-horn and knife in the cashmere girdle were forgotten. Altogether the figure was calculated to transport the imagination back to the days of Zion's pride, and might well have passed for that of a Jewish monarch. The illusion wanted not some favourable adjuncts ; the un-English-like tomb, and the vast concourse of Jews assembled, the torches lighting up their remarkable countenances with picturesque effect—the prevalence of Eastern costume, and the Arabian spices perfuming the evening air—the robed high-priest in white with his grey beard ; the parchment scroll in his hand, out of which his sonorous voice sounded in Hebrew the praises of the departed, every now and then becoming tremulous with an inborn feeling far more moving than all the lofty sentences he had constructed—these circumstances aided the dream-like aspect of the picture. One touching incident occurred while the high-priest

was reading. Sylvio, the merchant's four-footed companion in Myrza's tower, bounded suddenly up to the tomb, and there stopping short, looked in upon its departed master with wistful melancholy in its expressive eye. Before any one could prevent, the greyhound had leaped in upon the body, and was coiled up at its feet with a look that seemed to plead to be left to perish with it. Judith then sank on her knees, and the voice of her lamentation thrilled on the hearts of those who loved her. It was echoed by many others, until the high-priest found his oration disregarded. All were weeping and crying around. He then deposited the parchment roll in the grave, and scattering dust on his head, wept equally with the rest.

The lamps in the tomb were extinguished, and the oil poured out, as a metaphor of the brevity of life. With a similar view, a glass of costly Shiraz wine was drank by the rabbins and priests, the glass broken into the grave. All persons present then pressed near, but in an orderly manner, to take a last view of their benefactor. This done, they retired, and two rabbins, descending into the space left beside the coffin, covered it with a lid of cedar, superbly wrought in silver with Hebrew mottoes and devices. The greyhound had with difficulty been dislodged from the feet of the corpse, and it now stood with its nose close to the coffin, whining in a manner highly expressive. The sight of Judith's sufferings as she tore herself from the sad spot inspired the deepest sympathy and compassion. Again and again she turned back to take a parting look of the coffin that enclosed the parent who had been so justly dear to her.

At the boundary of the Jews' quarter, in the strait, Lady Isabella met her Hebrew friend. A small train of four of her ladies and four palace guards were mounted around a horse litter hung with purple velvet curtains. Into this elegant vehicle the canoness handed Judith, taking a seat by her side.

Gesta gave his hand to Judith with a look of deep melancholy; her tears responded to it.

'I shall hear from you soon?' said he, inquiringly. Lady Isabella answered for her friend in the affirmative. Lord Hugh was standing close by, wishful to address one word at least to the object of his now ardent but hopeless affection, yet held back by secret reluctance to intrude himself upon her notice.

Lady Isabella held the curtain back a moment expecting him to approach. He advanced a step, bowed, and stopped again with a heightened colour. The canoness understood his feelings, and by a kind glance made him understand that she did so.

The cavalcade began to move forward toward a Grange distant a few miles from Lincoln; when Lord Hugh and Gesta mounted their horses which were waiting by, and with their esquires proceeded to escort it along the road.

Judith and the Lady Isabella remained in sorrowful retirement during one year and a half. Gesta visited them at regular intervals, and, more rarely, Lord Hugh also came. The conversation between the affianced pair wore an increasing air of constraint and reserve. Judith *wished* to love the devoted man to whom she had promised her hand, nay, she persuaded herself that she *did* love him; and had not Lord Hugh's uncomplaining melancholy met her eye--had not his delicate and unobtrusive attentions stolen irresistibly on her heart she might have done so. Gesta encouraged the visits of the crusader, possessed with an infatuated desire to prove the extent of his influence. As time wore on, it might have been expected that Judith would have been solicited to name a day for her marriage, but Gesta was altogether silent on the subject. Lady Isabella wondered at this, but Judith only felt the circumstance as a welcome relief. It was her hidden desire now to live single, for the best half of her heart was on the other side

of the grave. Still, if Gesta had but hinted at the fulfilment of her promise, she would have told him that her hand was his at any time he chose; for she deeply felt her obligations to him, and thought no sacrifice too great to promote his happiness.

The gnawing pangs of *his* heart surpass imagination. Never had he suffered more. He earnestly desired Judith's happiness, but saw that it could never be in his exclusive keeping. As this fatal truth presented itself to his shrinking heart he gazed resolutely upon it, and, although the effort cost him an agony greater than could be produced by the separation of soul and body, he determined to renounce her. From the time this generous resolve was made he became more at peace. Under the darkest circumstances nobleness of conduct never loses its reward. He now sought the confidence of Lord Hugh, and learning from him that the avarice of the king had prevented the restoration of the property left by the Lady Gant, (the abbot's forfeit riches, out of which the restoration was to be made, having been claimed by his highness,) Gesta found an early opportunity for petitioning Henry on his behalf. The application proving unsuccessful—the king having divers ready excuses wherewith to put off the unwelcome suit—Gesta entreated to be allowed to devote himself henceforward to the study and practice of war under Prince Edward, and begged that his office of constable of the king's castles in Lincoln, Sleaford, and Newark, might be transferred to Lord Hugh.

'What!' exclaimed Henry in surprise, 'art thou willing to put into another man's hand all the honours I have bestowed on thee?'

'With your grace's leave,' replied Gesta, 'I will win more honourable honours than these.'

'Oh, by our lady! we have foes enough to try thy mettle upon,' returned Henry pleasantly. 'The prince is now preparing for a battle

with the Scots, who have been pillaging our English border; thou shalt go with him; and if thy prowess be equal to thy eloquence, we will not lose sight of thee. Thou shalt have a sufficient provision out of thy father's estates to maintain thy title with due seeming while thou art in the wars, and when it pleases thee to return to the constableness of Lincoln, thou shalt possess it.'

Gesta hastened to acquaint Lord Hugh with what he had done.

'And now, my lord,' said he, when he had finished his recital, 'you will I hope seek without delay the hand of Judith. You start! and look at me incredulously! I am not trifling, that would ill suit a heart agitated like mine. I have resigned my seat of authority in this county to you with no other intention. I have loved her madly, and my love is incapable of change, but I have long seen that *you* are the possessor of her affections. I know she would unite herself to me, but I will not allow the sacrifice to be made. My fond hopes I resign. To you I yield her.'

Lord Hugh was astonished. With difficulty he found a voice.

'My respect for you has always been great, but now your nobility of soul amazes me, and fills me with admiration. Sir Gesta, I have seen many an act of martial heroism performed on the field of battle, but I know no man living or dead who could have done an act like *this*, beside yourself.'

'Do not praise me too soon, my lord,' said Gesta, with a melancholy sigh. 'I have not got through my task yet!'

'I will relieve you from it,' said the crusader, forcibly resisting the selfish impulses of his throbbing heart. 'I will not accept the rich gift you offer me.'

'Beware, my lord!' said Gesta, firmly and energetically; 'beware that you do not show the least coldness of regard for Judith, lest I repent of my purpose. She shall not be the wife of one who does not fully appreciate her value.'

'I appreciate it but too well,' returned the crusader. 'But she must be *your* wife, my friend, you only deserve her.'

'Swear to me, my Lord Hugh, that she has your *undivided* affection,' exclaimed Gesta, with energy.

'I do swear it!' emphatically ejaculated the crusader. 'And no other woman shall ever have any interest in my heart.'

'O Lord Hugh! never forget what it has cost me to give her up to you!' cried Gesta, with mournful emphasis; 'let the constant remembrance of the bitter sacrifice I now make, be an additional tie upon your heart, binding you to her. When you are happy, I do not ask to be remembered; but if darker hours should befall—if she should have to grieve anew over the sufferings of her people, or if discomforts should arise through your union with a Hebrew—then think of what I have borne for your sakes, and never let an unkind word or look pass between you to embitter calamity.'

His voice was broken, and he turned away a moment to conceal the overpowering emotions with which he was affected. The crusader endeavoured in vain to argue him from his purpose.

'All that you can say to me I have said to myself!' was Gesta's brief rejoinder. 'Judith's happiness is before every other consideration. I am determined to release her from her promise to me. I shall bid her farewell to-morrow, and it is most likely that she and I will meet no more.'

The next day the crusader and Gesta left Lincoln together, and arrived near night-fall at the Grange, where Judith dwelt with the Lady Isabella. The declining sun poured a mild but full radiance on the carved wooden gable of the elegant little building, which had been erected after a charming Gothic model by the bishop of Lincoln, as a summer retreat for his sister. The country around it was all a level waste, but within its boundaries there was a perfect paradise. A mild shower

had imparted a grateful softness to the hour. The grass and flowers appeared refreshed, giving forth a sweeter scent than usual, and more glowing hues. The zephyrs felt delightfully balmy and cool. The caged birds hung up on the outside of the windows seemed to answer the crowing cock with more lively cheerfulness, fluttering their wings, poor birds! as if they longed at this vesper hour to be flying at will beneath the evening sky; while at the same time they made the best of their confinement, and warbled each a joyful challenge to their imprisoned companions.

A balcony window on the ground story was open, and the rich tones of a fine female voice issued thence, swelling and undulating above a bewilderingly harmonious harp accompaniment.

'It is Judith!' softly ejaculated Lord Hugh, pausing near the myrtled balcony with his companion. Gesta spoke not, but closed his eyes and listened. This was to be his *last* meeting with her—he should hear that matchless voice no more! The thought was heartrending, he covered his eyes with his hand, and trembled. The crusader viewed him with anxiety and intense sympathy.

A second voice, not of so fine a quality, nor so thrillingly modulated, but skilful and well tuned, now supported the first, increasing the magical effect of the strain upon the two concealed listeners.

'That is Belaset,' said the crusader; and as he spoke, Gesta and he moved forward a little, so as to obtain a sight of the fair minstrels. It was a beautiful picture. The picturesque balcony, and the quaint casement which took its name from it, were both adorned with a screen of flexible shrubs, whose simple white and pink flowers drooped from graceful tendrils upon the heads of the Hebrew lady and her maiden. She was wrapped in a lofty enthusiasm, inspired by the fine composition she had been singing. Her eyes were turned upwards; a tear trembling on the long jet eyelashes and

a spiritual light quivering in the dark orbs beneath their shadow. Her dress was rich black velvet, made open at the bosom over a white silk vest, and descending in heavy folds from the waist downwards; such a costume well suited the stateliness of her figure, and the simple majesty of her countenance. Her magnificent black hair flowed down uncovered in masses of glossy ringlets, contrasting the dazzling fairness of her neck and face.

Belaset was called out of the balcony, and while Gesta's sad eyes were fastened on Judith, the sacred harmony which her fingers and voice were producing ceased abruptly; she shivered, put down her harp, and burst into an agony of tears. The crusader and Gesta were about to step backward until she should have become calmer; but Judith arose, and stood leaning over the balcony. She did not perceive them, however, though they were so near to her; but supposing she was alone, wept freely, occasionally murmuring to herself. The crusader would have drawn Gesta away even at the risk of disturbing her rather than seem to profane the privacy of her sorrow, but Gesta was immovable.

'This is the last time I shall behold her,' said he, 'let me indulge myself now!' After a few seconds, Judith drew from her robe the same Greek manuscript in which she had found comfort in the prison when awaiting her doom; she opened its leaves, and raised to her lips a thin tress of beautiful fair hair. The knight was deeply moved, it had been shorn from his child. She laid it down; opened at another place; raised a fragment of darker hair sprinkled with grey, her *father's*; looked at that long, with heart-breaking anguish in her countenance; replaced it between the leaves, and closed the manuscript. Lord Hugh was now about to attract her notice by stepping forward, but Gesta held him by the arm and whispered an emphatic 'Hush!'

A third place Judith opened in the manuscript. Now both the

beholders' hearts thrilled, the one with sickening pangs, the other with ecstatic joy. It was a decayed rose that she had preserved here, and both recollected at the same moment that when they were last leaving the Grange together Lord Hugh plucked it from its stalk and presented it to her. This incident was quite enough to confirm the unhappy Gesta in his almost failing resolution. He pressed the crusader's arm convulsively, and whispered in hoarse accents—

'Retire on one side a few minutes, my lord; I must speak to Judith alone.'

Lord Hugh turned away down an alley shaded with rose laurel; where he walked and mused until Gesta's voice summoned him to the house. The latter meanwhile presented himself before Judith, who returned the manuscript to its place of concealment in her robe with some trepidation, a faint flush dying her cheeks.

After the first greeting, which was in a measure constrained, Gesta entered the house, and sat by her in the balcony.

'Beloved Judith,' said he, rallying himself for the heroic sacrifice he had to perform, 'I have long delayed to claim the hand your goodness promised to me, and perhaps my motives have not been perfectly estimated even by *you*.'

Judith was silent, for she had no doubt that he had now come to make the claim he spoke of, and was shocked to find what a shrinking of heart the thought occasioned. Gesta gazed scrutinizingly on her face, where he could not fail to read repugnance to the theme. To probe her further, he resumed,

'You do not speak in reply; but something persuades me you have been too long intimate with the workings of my heart to imagine for a moment that *indifference* to you could lodge there.'

'I am satisfied of that,' she tremulously rejoined.

'And are you now willing to fulfil my hopes?' softly inquired Gesta.

The rich damask crimson hue that had been so long banished from her cheeks glowed again upon them now, but was quickly displaced by an ashy paleness. She faltered some inaudible words, and a tear sufficiently eloquent to the unhappy Gesta rolled down her cheeks.

'You will be indulgent to my weakness,' said she, recovering herself, and placing her hand in his as a token of assent to his inquiry. 'I am not as firm-minded as I used to be.'

Gesta with tender fervour pressed that soft hand, while she continued,

'Your unvarying goodness to *him* I have lost will bind my heart to you for ever.'

'Are you sure of that?' asked Gesta, with affectionate firmness.

Judith coloured again, and again her heart gave a rebellious throb of aversion to the union. She quelled the impulse, and replied with equal firmness—

'I will ever be a true wife to you, Gesta.'

'If you were once my wife, I would stake my life upon your truth; yes, and upon your affection too,' said he; 'but think you, dearest Judith, that you would not sometimes feel a pang in secret when you remembered the man who *first* won your love? Nay, be not agitated! This is a question I would not have put to you lightly.'

'Gesta!' exclaimed Judith, 'the time for all concealment is past! I feel it due to you, my kind, my best friend! to speak *all* the truth. *One* whom you know well has hitherto possessed more power over my affections than I have skill to reveal. I have striven against it—prayed against it—all to no purpose. But I do cherish the confident hope that, when I am yours by the holy vows of religion, this fatal preference will be finally vanished. You know my principles, Gesta, you can trust to them; you know my heart was early trained to virtue and uprightness, you can trust to its sense of duty. Believe me, I shall not render your life unhappy, I shall not be unhappy.'

'You shall not! generous, beloved Judith! and that you may not, I will release you from the painful struggle which for my sake you are willing to encounter. This hour I bid adieu to all expectations of a married life. I have ordered my esquires to meet me here at seven o'clock, and at eight I have engaged to join the forces of Prince Edward at Newark. You little thought, Judith, that your ignoble *cousin* would live to shine in war.'

'I do not understand you!' exclaimed Judith, turning upon him a glance of astonishment, mingled with joy and regret.

'I am going to win the honours of a soldier under the prince-royal,' deliberately returned Gesta, smiling dejectedly.

'And I—?'

'Will, I trust, still be wife to the constable of Lincoln. I have prevailed with the king to obtain a transfer of my office to Lord Hugh, in the earnest hope that you will ally yourself with him.'

'Never!' exclaimed Judith, rising in great agitation; 'if indeed you are magnanimous enough to set me free from my promise to you, I shall live unmarried.'

'I solemnly request that you will not!' cried Gesta, with decision and warmth. 'The sweet consciousness of having secured your happiness by bestowing you on the crusader will be enough bliss for me. You love him; he regards you with a devotion not inferior to my own; you ought therefore to accept him. I will take no denial from you, Judith; this is the last request I shall ever make you; if you refuse me, I shall think little of your esteem.'

Judith had been taken by surprise, and she begged him to stay until the morrow at the Grange, that she might have time to deliberate.

'No,' said he, resolutely, 'this hour I quit you! I cannot depend upon my own fortitude if I linger in your society. My mind is perfectly made up. If you will accept Lord Hugh you will give me the only satisfaction my soul is now capable of

receiving—say, Judith, will you, or will you not?

'No, no, Gesta; I will fulfil my engagement to you, or dwell in single life!'

'The last you shall not do, Judith. I feel as the guardian of your peace now you are deprived of any one more legitimate. You will pine yourself into an early grave if there are not strong motives laid upon your conscience for striving against the grief which is consuming you. You must have duties to perform, and gentle cares to contend with; you must feel yourself placed in a relationship requiring the active energies of your mind, and the exercise of new and peaceful affections. If you *will not* marry Lord Hugh, I must hold you to your engagement with *me*. I have resigned all my rights in this county, and have agreed to serve in an expedition against the rebels of the Scottish border, but the ceremony can be performed before I set out.'

'So soon!' faltered Judith.

'So soon,' returned Gesta, decisively. Here he called suddenly on the name of Lord Hugh, to Judith's great trepidation, and the crusader instantly advanced from the green alley he had been pacing. Judith's heart beat high and quick as she observed his speaking glance of gratitude to Gesta, and she inclined her head to him with a reserved and confused air. He, however, regarded not this reserve, but accosted her with undisguised, though timid passion.

'My lord,' said Gesta, 'my plan has not entirely met with Judith's approbation; therefore as soon as your confessor arrives in company with my esquires, I believe I must get him to perform the marriage ceremony for myself—unless indeed you can recommend your suit more effectually than I have done.'

With these words he disappeared from the balcony, and from the room, while Lord Hugh hastened to avail himself of the opportunity thus afforded to him.

Gesta was walking in the before-

mentioned alley, conversing with Lady Isabella, when they perceived the crusader and Judith arm in arm approaching them. The rapturous looks of the one, and the downcast satisfaction in the eyes of the other, at once conveyed to Gesta the result of the conference. He sighed involuntarily; but advanced to meet them with a smile. Not a word was exchanged; silent glances proved sufficiently expressive. The four returned to the house; and the esquires and the confessor having arrived, Gesta entreated that he might see the union take place before he departed.

Lady Isabella, who rejoiced in this change of Judith's prospects, seconded his desire; and by her intercession chiefly it was that the consent of the latter was obtained.

After the ceremony, Gesta filled a glass wine-cup and presented it to Judith, who put it to her lips; it was then passed in succession to Lord Hugh, Lady Isabella, the confessor (formerly the hermit), and Belaset; when each had drank, Gesta threw the remainder of the wine on the floor, according to the custom of the Jews on such occasions, then placing the glass itself on the ground, crushed it with his foot, exclaiming—

'O King of the universe! grant that this marriage turn out happily.'

'*Mozol lour!*' echoed Belaset, with tears of joy. '*Mozol lour!* Jehovah be blessed!'

The confessor did not altogether like these Jewess allusions, and seriously pronounced his hope that Judith would no longer cleave to the people among whom she had had the misfortune to be born.

She replied, that for the last two years she had made the New Testament her counsellor and her trust; but she could never cease to love the sacred and royal nation to which she belonged. She confessed that she thought a veil was upon their eyes when they read these records of the Saviour, but that was only a reason why she should pray for them and pity them.

The confessor being not quite satisfied of her conversion to the true (Catholic) church, inquired if she would wish to confess to him, or to some other priest.

'I thank you,' she replied, 'but my confessor shall be God, though if you please you shall be my adviser.' Although she smiled, there was a cold dignity in her manner which effectually silenced the well-meaning, but too papistical confessor. Perhaps Lord Hugh inwardly regretted her rejection of the *Catholic* faith, though something whispered that he ought to be satisfied with her acceptance of the faith of the Son of God. Gesta truly admired her discriminating judgment, but what could Judith do or say that he would *not* admire? Time was past, however, for the indulgence of his admiration; he must turn away from every endearing thought of her as a sin.

'And I will do it!' said he inwardly, with solemn determination, as he rose to bid farewell. His resolution was severely tried during the last painful moments of parting. Judith presented him with her Greek manuscript, in which she left a portion of her father's hair.

'You have been brought up a Jew,' said she, 'read these papers, and examine for yourself.'

'And with this revered lock of hair I would fain have another if Lord Hugh will permit,' said Gesta.

The crusader immediately severed from Judith's head a jetty lock and presented it to Gesta, who gazed a moment on the long curl, then hid it in the manuscript.

The last adieu was not taken without tears from all excepting Gesta himself. He had ridden a little way from the Grange when he stopped to take a long and lingering look behind. The form of Judith was still discernible in the garden.

'Thank God! the struggle is over!' he exclaimed; and closing his eyes tightly an instant to prevent the salt drops from issuing, he turned again in his saddle, and galloped away.

CHAPTER XLI.

SOME years had fled when, one summer afternoon, a knight at the head of fifty retainers, each with lance and bow, led their horses by the bridle up the steep street of the strait in Lincoln. He was short of stature and partially deformed. His face was thin, and would have been cadaverous of complexion had not long exposure to the sun in hotter climes embrowned it. His eyes were of a pale blue; and as they glanced up the hill to the gloomy towers and battlements of the castle a deep and settled dejection was observable in them. His visage as a whole, when in repose, took the same character, and the most careless observer could scarcely fail to be affected by it.

The heat was so great that the soldiers, already overcome by the fatigue of a long journey, seemed ready to faint. Every moment they wiped the streaming perspiration from their faces. In the middle of the hilly street there was a hostellerie, and here they gladly paused to rest, and refresh themselves. Their leader left his horse to be fed and watered with the rest, then turned off into the Jews quarter, and strolled about till sunset. All this part of the town lay in ruins. The Jews had been driven out of England by an arbitrary edict of the king, after spoliation and violence had done its worst among them. The knight murmured some exclamations expressive of his indignation and moved to that part where Jocenus' mansion had stood, and where his garden had bloomed. A boor was watching a herd of swine feeding among the ruins of the former, and the latter was partly occupied by straggling huts. He approached the tomb of Jocenus; the wall he himself had built around it remained uninjured. He tried the door; it was not fastened, and he opened it; then stood under the round arch to view the changing heavens, which had been but just before intensely azure, faintly streaked with vapours of filmy white, but now

darkened awfully with heavy clouds rushing up in masses from the horizon. There were two vivid flashes of lightning; then the clouds rolled backward; their fine bright purple colour grandly relieving the soft and pale evening sky. For some time he watched the splendid effects created in the west among these purple piles, the sun now dividing them with a lake of liquid gold, now propping them with its burning disk, and skirting them with living crimson.

A heavy sigh and moan caused him to turn his head abruptly, and he perceived a female figure in white, prostrate before the tomb. His heart thrilled; he stood motionless and heard the agonising prayer of one in extreme sorrow.

'Tis *she!*' he muttered. Then aloud he exclaimed the name of Judith. She arose hastily. Ah, how pale! how wan! was the once radiant Hebrew lady. Could this be Judith?—That high and holy beauty could belong to no other than her!—yet still how altered! She recognized the friend and companion of her early years—him whose constant devotion had known no change—and with a cry of joy sprang forward, and fainted on his neck.

'Not *thus* I thought to meet thee,' exclaimed Gesta, clasping her with melancholy ardour. The clouds now again rushed up over the city, and a portentous gloom prevailed. Thunder rolled in the distance, and at once the storm burst on the city in terrible magnificence. Scarcely a moment intervened between the dreadful flashes, and the livid fork darts were distinctly seen playing about the tall trees near the tomb. Closer Gesta pressed the pale lady to his heart, and tenderly covered her thinly clad form with his mantle.

No shelter was at hand save the archway in the wall, beneath which he bore her. Then she recovered with a flood of tears.

'Gesta—dear Gesta!' she ejaculated. 'I have longed to see thee once more before I die, and I have my wish; now I do not desire to live another moment!'

'Hast thou not been happy?' asked Gesta.

She shuddered, and the profound sorrow in her dark eyes answered him.

'Has Lord Hugh—'

'Peace! brother of my soul!' exclaimed Judith. 'Entertain no anger against *him!* My refusal to embrace the Catholic faith brought great trouble on him. He was very patient under it all; and refused to separate from me, as commanded by the king and the new bishop of Lincoln (for you know of course that good Bishop Grosteste has departed to his rest); but at length he was threatened with the anathema of the church, and then—and then—'

Another long and bitter fit of weeping concluded her sentence, whilst the dreadful lightnings continued to fill the air with flame, almost unheeded by the pair.

'He left you then!' hoarsely exclaimed Gesta.

'Yes, he set out a month ago for Palestine. I shall never see him more! O my father!' she vehemently ejaculated, stretching her white and wasted arms upwards. 'Behold how I long to join thee in eternity! O see and pity your weary—weary child!'

'Villain!' muttered Gesta, with clenched teeth; 'dastardly—base-hearted villain! Judith, here is a heart that would never have deserted thee. Deserted thee! Oh, what a thought! Come to that faithful heart, dear injured angel! Come, and be at peace!'

She threw her arms around his neck, murmured a broken word or two of intense and grateful affection, drew a quick sigh, and suddenly expired.

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